CAMPAIGNS
And Intervals
BY JEAN GIRAUDOUX

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CAMPAIGNS AND INTERVALS

Campaigns and Intervals

By

Lieut. Jean Giraudoux

Translated by

Elizabeth S. Sergeant

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ANDRÉ DU FRESNOIS

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CONTENTS

Dedication

I. The First War

I. In Alsace 3

II. The First Battle 11

III. War is Long 27

IV. A Triumphal Departure 49

Portuguese Days 69

II. The Grand Tour

I. From the Vosges to Belgium ... 85

II. War Currents on the Highroad 104

III. Vigil near Paris 116

IV. First Dead 130

The Dardanelles 155

III. Five Nights, Five Dawns on the Marne

I. Sunday 171

II. Monday 186

III. Tuesday 205

IV. Wednesday 216

V. Thursday 236

May on Lake Asquam 259

I

The First War

The First War

I

IN ALSACE

Bellemagny, August 17, 1914.

BEYOND the frontier at last! Yet, as we wake to find ourselves stretched out in our cramped hay-loft, it is an effort to remember that Alsace lies asleep close by — remember it and feel glad of it. Our bodies are weary, our minds dusky — then, all at once, the thought that the regiment has really started strikes home. Up we leap, half dressed, strange beings rising swift as resurrected creatures out of the hay about us, bemoaning the stiffness of arms and legs and backs. The straws have left red marks on our hands and our sore cheeks, and we shall look till night as if we had slept between the Tertiary and the Quaternary periods.

...Six o'clock. We join the telephone operators in the convent garden. We are in reserve to-day, and the convoy is streaming past us.

All the vehicles still have their own paint and their own signs. Motor-buses from the Alpine route come rumbling along, some from Chamounix, some from the Grande Chartreuse, — we point these out to the lay Sister, — some from Grenoble. A tourists' crusade, it seems, that has started off on the spur of the moment for a newly discovered magic country, and been joined on the road by the omnibuses of the towns through which it has jaunted: the *White Horse* from Pontarlier, the *Cuckoo* from Noyon, red and black bourgeois creatures, yet incapable of resisting such a fascinating adventure; the only ones that kick about it are the horses from Forcalquier, which find the station even farther off than usual.

Eight o'clock — ten o'clock — noon. The only refuge from time is to count it in two-hour watches, as do sentinels and naval officers. The soldiers are lounging about on the ground, destroying everything that they can lay eyes or hands on in their immediate vicinity — collecting piles of stones, carving their names on the roots of trees; indeed, they are fairly wallowing in the meadows, like the horses which have pawed up the grass and sunk in to their knees. Two o'clock — the corporal telephone operator has his nose in

a series of little green-and-white volumes. I fall upon them when a break in the connection takes him away, or a horse gets tangled in the wire, but he reads them with prodigious speed, and I never find the same one twice.

Suddenly I myself am called to the telephone.

"Come along," says an unknown voice.

"With my gun?"

"Come along."

It's the Nineteenth company speaking, and very slowly I follow the telephone wire which brings me to its post. This is the only way not to get lost, for everything that does not come over the wire comes alongside it; the operator receives, with equal hospitality, canned goods, munitions, and men who are being shifted. A whole storehouse is piled up beside him now, and the disentangled horse is there, too, surrounded by a group that is trying to make him neigh into the mouthpiece. But he thinks it is a phonograph, and refuses to compromise himself.

It's a lieutenant who is asking for me. In the days when he was studying for his *licence*, he knew my classmates at the Lycée Louis-le-Grand, and wants to talk about them. Since the war had to come he congratulates himself on having

taken his degree in history. . . . Evening falls as we gossip on, and a round moon rises above the horizon like a great pewter platter. The *Angélus* is pealing in some village that our army has not yet reached — our first care is to cut the bell-ropes in all the church-towers. The afterglow of the sunset, the sea-wind, too, come to us to-night from the east, from the Rhine. It is a soft evening when one may almost believe — by letting mere chance dominate probabilities — that there will be no dead during the war. We talk, the lieutenant and I, not without harshness, of the peace that till now has been our only source of danger, and of the two or three common friends whom it has killed: there was Revel — he died suddenly in the tramway in his best frock coat, like the regular civilian he was; and Manchet — it was at Mayence he met his end, a prisoner, even in those days, of a German professor who had presented him to Baedeker's daughter. Then we talk lightly of the living: of Besnard, with his absurd translations, of the three Dournelle brothers, so carefully separated in the classroom, and yet so oddly successful in getting the same grade in their Latin themes. Like all the other Frenchmen of this month of

August, 1914, who thought to satisfy the war by sacrificing to it in their heart of hearts the hypocrites and knaves of their acquaintance, we feel — though not without a pang of pity — that the cheats and dunces must surely be exposed to death. But the Greek professors, the Fellows at Upsal, the literary aspirants engaged to the daughters of famous scientists, seem to us invulnerable. How could we possibly guess that Besnard had already been killed? Or that the Dournelles, as they started one after the other for Lorraine, would all three be swallowed up within a few weeks of each other, like well-diggers successively asphyxiated in trying to rescue a comrade? Could we believe that even Saint-Arné — the chap who fought a duel with a druggist — was dead already? The lieutenant sends him a postcard on which we inquire whether his head is still on his shoulders. . . . Like our soldiers, we were still at the point where you tease a comrade by putting his cap on the freshest grave in the cemetery.

Quarter to five — ten minutes to five. Toward meal-times, hours should be nearer together. I leave the lieutenant of the historical degree, and go back to the convent. But they send us up to

sleep in the schoolhouse, while the company from the schoolhouse comes down to sleep in the convent. They don't want us to get fixed habits, and are suspicious of both God and the schoolmaster.

Burnhaupt, August 18.

At five o'clock the regiment is off again in the direction of Mulhouse. After this fortnight far from towns and cities every shop-window in the places we pass through attracts us, as if the bread, wine, and chocolate set out so temptingly were a feast offered us by the tradespeople. When we finally halt, our toilets and our gossip with the citizens are interrupted by the bombardment of Upper Burnhaupt, whose church-tower reels and falls in ruins. That of Lower Burnhaupt, seen through the shrubbery, now looks a few inches taller than before.

We are beginning to be tired of fighting all by ourselves. Impossible to root out a German. In the trenches at Saint-Cosme and Bretten there are no signs of anything but *Gemütlichkeit*, — of the Baden, or Munich, or Saxon variety according to the regiment, — a harmonica, some verses from Goethe printed across a bunch of violets at the bottom of a post-card; just such a pacific collec-

tion as one finds in the Maillot subway on race-nights. No helmets, no sabers, but a valise and a catalogue of electric apparatus. On some dressings that have been thrown away a few drops of pale blood — the blood of a hospital patient, the blood of a race that remains civilian under arms, whose life, and hunger, and thirst are not purified by war. Already I feel the injustice of making soldiers fight against this mass of civilians. A useless war, it seems, where, under the name of Blue Light Horse, and White Hussars, — but always in the same greenish coat, — we shall capture waiters, and painters from Dresden with square eyeballs, who are doubtless already cutting their French sentinel into cubes.

The air is thin. There had been a sort of vacuum here just before we came: a few corpses — those of the Germans who could not live without breathing. The rest of them have had time to change their nationality in the cellars and barns of the villages. Some people arisen from a half sleep talk with us in a half French. The dozen hostages are ready: there are even thirteen. The servants are all trained to war, and the child that cries at the noise of the cannon is slapped. It is only the furniture, with its scrawled inscriptions,

that tries to escape by declaring its identity. "I am the sideboard, comrade"; "I am the fragile glass where more than one heart has poured out its tears." Doting cushions talk madly of dawn and love, and on the fronts of craven pieces of furniture denunciations in German script make their appearance: "My masters are hidden inside me." But they are n't there! From France alone comes the proof of their existence. Lieutenant Souchier has heard from his wife that forty-two prisoners are being aired in Roanne! Not a child or a paralyzed old woman on the road to Charlieu but has already counted them to see that the number is complete.

II

THE FIRST BATTLE

Enschingen, August 19.

A LONG march in the fog. The three or four men of the regiment who had provided themselves with waterproof capes at Roanne declare that they would prefer a good shower. We see nothing from the road but what you can see from a trench: a slope, a parapet. But the cannonading becomes so violent that the fog lifts — instead of bringing rain, these cannon have continued to take after the rustic guns of Burgundy and Touraine, which drive off thunder and hail from the vineyards. Since Bellemagny my comrades have known how to read and recognize the word "*Schule*," and in every village their sole interest is the schoolhouse; indeed, at Lower Burnhaupt the nice question arises as to whether the seven children in the courtyard, who look exactly alike, are the schoolmaster's sons or his pupils. Devaux, who can read only the word "*Kloster*," convent, looks for it on every house-front. War has n't yet destroyed

the real houses hereabouts, but all their replicas in miniature, like letter-boxes and dove-cotes, have felt its hand, and a German doll, a *Schutzmann*, is hung to a gable. Soon there will be nothing to be seen that is not soldier-size, and, once the children are killed, it will be our turn.

No scattered farms — nothing but small towns made up of the most dissimilar houses, to which their straggling growth of geraniums gives a certain uniformity; each of them, as the peasants among us recognize by imperceptible signs, must correspond to one of those meadows, fields, and orchards that mingle in the plain. The church weathercocks amuse themselves by leaning over as far as they can without having to open their wings. Rather a dull landscape, for the sad shades of the gayest colors prevail: yellow ochre for roofs and tiles, dark green for meadows and leaves — even the grass has an air of immortality. Only the Vosges, on our left, are transparent. We march on till night and, as the wind changes, so the battle seems to change its direction sharply, like a hunt. I have Frobart for a neighbor; he comes from the same little town as myself and talks to me, as usual, of the quarrel between the Larostes and the Ferlands. The Larostes, he says, no

longer bow to the Ferlands, and yet — here's the riddle — M. Ferland senior keeps on bowing to young Mme. Laroste.

At five o'clock, a sudden stop. Ten minutes, a quarter of an hour, pass. We make a great fuss, but the road is not clear. A near-sighted captain of the general staff arrives at a gallop, asks for the colonel, and looks for him in my squad. So I show him about and learn that fighting is in progress in the direction of Flaxlanden, southeast of Mulhouse; that four companies are to advance, four remaining in reserve; and that ours, the Twentieth, will be one of those to march. Then I go back to Frobart, who wants to hear all about it.

"What battle is it we're to fight? " he asks.

"The battle of Flaxlanden."

He finds the name of his battle not at all easy to pronounce; he wants to know, too, if it is a skirmish or a real battle, and if they're fighting in the village itself, or in the neighboring region. I can enlighten him on one point: it is surely a battle. From the interstices of the convoy pour out colonels with brassards who are thinking of their sons at Saint-Cyr, and keeping an anxious eye out for wheel-grease; and hard on their heels comes that lieutenant in gray-green — the

division paymaster — whom the whole French army has taken for a rifleman all through August. The commissariat trucks are hastening to the rear in a thoroughly undignified manner. In the company, too, wild confusion. We are like a mob of actors on whom the curtain has risen one minute too soon; we suddenly realize that we none of us know our places in the fray. Sergeant-majors dig theories out of their knapsacks. The drummers and buglers come and attach themselves to each company in turn, with the air of giving it a present, and are sent off again to the next company, with abusive language. The sergeant-majors order us to hang our identification disks around our necks, on the pretext that they are a protection to the chest, and that our arms might be blown off; and they number the men in each squad in series, so that we may know who is in command, in case the leader is wounded. Frobart has no chance of commanding unless he is left quite by himself, and Artaud will have only Frobart under his orders.

Our canteens are filled with water, in spite of the protests of those who were hoarding a little pure absinthe or rum. Only the stretcher-bearers are ready: in fact, they have already started; we

have to stop them forcibly and make them take their places in the ranks. . . . We lacked two hours of being really ready for war. But all the same they give us twenty minutes to pull off dangling buttons, harness the dogs to their carts, and make everything fast to the regiment that may be hanging loose; to pick up papers, and bring our bivouac to a high state of cleanliness and polish — as if we were going to fight right here, or were expecting a storm. No danger of our slipping or falling. The good faith of the regiment is restored; the men who have stowed their packs away in the trucks, with the connivance of the drivers, run to fetch them; the company vehicles hand out alcohol to the ambulances; the machine-gunners replace the cardboard filling of their cartridge-drums with real ammunition. It's not long before every man has his exact battle-weight — you might put every one of them on the scales, as shells are weighed at the factory. All those who lacked canteens, or third cartridge-belts, or trigger-plugs, suddenly discover a collection near by, and a cap even turns up for Artaud, our guide, who has been bareheaded since Roanne. It is a red cap, without a cover, a very conspicuous one, but Artaud scoffs at the idea of being picked out by

the enemy. Has n't he already a white horse, and the flags of all the Allies painted on his cart? Tonking's emblem is n't even dry.

The order comes. We start off in the direction of Bernwiller.

When we get there we march through at double-quick. So many troops must have been passing through during the day that nobody is at the doors to watch this regiment running to battle. Yet we should have liked to ask how many kilometres it is to Flaxlanden. Two policemen threaten one of our men, who has robbed a plum-tree as he went along. A sutler, shaving on the sidewalk before a mirror hung to a cherry-tree, waits nervously, his face all dripping with lather, till we have stopped shaking his road. On the path of these thousand men who have been suddenly sucked in to fill a vacuum, only such inhuman beings as are concerned to prevent them from bird's-nesting, or stealing chickens, or fishing for crawfish that are under size. We emerge from the village into a straight highway, empty and silent. Nobody returning from battle, either. We should be glad enough to see a cyclist coming, or a postal sergeant — anybody, even a civilian, or a woman would do, for they would make us feel as though

we were giving protection to more than two policemen and a half-shaved sutler. Yet all that we discover is a convoy of bloody horses, preceded by a pair of oxen wounded by machine-gun fire, but still hitched to their yoke. The oxen are toiling painfully along, and it is we who get out of the way, for few of us had thought to see animals wounded too. Some mutilated trees rise before us, a gaping street corner, a rock smashed to fragments. It is distinctly humiliating to get into the mêlée from this lower level — through vegetables and animals — when we had expected to make the descent from its topmost peak, by way of a certain general who is reported wounded, and should have been lying at the edge of the village, under a tree.

"*Halt!*"

The order is left face — face in the direction that we supposed to be safe. And we are, asserts the general staff, under artillery fire. They make us retire to the ditch. Two extra yards of safety.

Eight o'clock. The day is dying to-night without having grown old. The twilight is opaque, no thicker and no more transparent in one place than in another. It is impossible to guess where the sun has set, but the French army, which is so

poor at getting the points of the compass, won't be the worse for that to-night. All the stars, white and dead as the atmosphere, make one think of the North at midnight, and the hands of even the least rich among us are lit up, as by some sort of powerful radium. The night draws nearer us, from behind, as if we were defending it. No more shadows; ours have already deserted us, as if the battle were going to be serious, as if the sergeant-major had asked us for them, just now, with our registration books. Not a wandering star — all day long the cannon have been shaking down from the sky everything that was lightly attached to it; no more wavering constellations, nothing but the fixed stars buried to their very hilts. They are really all one sees; in spite of one's self one stares at them, and assumes a gallant and haughty air for these remote worlds whose whole interest, by the by, must at present be centered on Artaud's white horse.

As we are forbidden to sit down, the men lean back to back, cushioned by their packs, and thus take their rest in couples, talking softly together as they face, one toward the French darkness, and the other toward the darkness of Alsace. It is our first battle, and we are beginning

to block out the thoughts and gestures that we shall have, once we are fighters. We don't yet shake hands with each other, but our glances are so heavy that if they fall upon a neighbor's indifferent eyes, he has, perforce, to smile at us. We don't make our wills, but the soldiers who owed each other small sums pay them back, or cancel the debt. Only one man in the company sets down his last wishes: this is Lâtre, who leaves his business to his wife, and his wife to his father. We jokingly hand the paper about, and Lâtre follows it from squad to squad, as if to guard a precious heritage of his own.

Jalicot and I take a turn on the road. The men are collecting in groups. The square platoons have melted into rounded formations, and both walking and thinking come more easily along this battalion with no sharp corners. We exchange quiet words of recognition with the comrades we meet in the dark: "*C'est toi?*" — "*Oui, c'est moi!*" — "*C'est vous?*" The fellows whose first chance it is to show what stuff they are made of are lighting their cigarettes more tenderly than usual. That chap yonder seems to feel a remote drowsiness stealing over him, — the sleep that comes after battle, — and he yawns. All at once our

ignorance of war weighs us down, as if this were the night before an examination. We are almost ready to go over our military theory again, and feel guilty to have neglected our haltings, and our deployments. But chiefly, without respite, we think of the first wounded and the first dead of the battalion. All the mental power we have stumbles sharply over this first corpse. We understand the second, and the third, and toward the hundredth we ourselves stretch our stark length on the ground; but suddenly, in spite of us, the first dead whom we have finally laid out in our minds comes back to life, scrambles to his feet, and the whole thing has to be done over again. When a soldier who is setting a match to his pipe lights up his face for an instant, we tremble for him as if he were flashing a signal to death. Our shoulders slump; age comes upon us. Restlessly we wander up and down in this darkness which makes victory seem scarcely more desirable than morning. "*C'est toi?*" "Yes, it's I," comes the tremulous answer, out of a deep courage. . . .

A noise of galloping — the captain of the general staff brings the colonel an order to attack the village of Enschingen. The church-tower can be seen, just ahead of us, two kilometers farther

on. . . . He also feels it necessary to make a speech: —

"Forward, men of Roanne! — as you charged the Austrians!"

That's an old story. We did, in fact, beat the Austrians in 1814, at Roanne itself, but —

"And attention! You are under heavy artillery fire."

He finally leaves us. No, he is coming back again, still at a gallop.

"You are under light artillery fire!"

Will he reappear in this way for every new caliber — for carbines and revolvers? The colonel lifts his arm and lets it drop. We are off . . .

The four companies advance in line, a hundred yards apart, all in close formation, and quite silent. The men do not utter a word, in spite of their desire to know just what they are doing; whether this is a march of approach, or a charge, and if there will be any machine guns. Here and there a miner or a weaver has taken the precaution to put out his pipe or cigarette, as he does at the factory gate. The men are advancing very fast. The crisis of discipline they are undergoing for the first time resolves itself into silence and speed, and the most disciplined are marching double-

quick. The four sergeant-majors and I escort the colonel, who keeps just back of the center of the battalion. We follow with some difficulty, across fields and meadows broken by hedges. We stumble against a dead ox, very much swollen, from which we are lucky enough to bounce off again, and we are always jumping a brook, which keeps getting tangled in our legs, like a puttee that has come unwound. All at once a search-light illuminates the right-hand company, which stops, takes the mass formation with the precautions recommended for shells, every head under the pack in front, heads in the second rank hidden, eyes in the first line closed. . . . Darkness again. Little by little the village church-tower retreats underground, into its trench, and after that we walk blindly. No more cannon. A bullet, one single bullet, passes us by, spent — one single German does us the honor of firing at us. It must be the soldier who is throwing the search-light.

They are going so fast that there is no keeping up with them. We lose sight of them, and the terrain is difficult: sometimes grass or clover, then suddenly, straight across our path, rows of cabbages, artichokes, and dahlias. The meadows lie in the direction we are going, but the market-

gardens are set at a slant, as if they were trying to thwart our march. A cavalryman springs up behind us and asks the colonel to wait for the general, so we hurry the sergeant-majors off to the companies. A second cavalryman orders us to go on: we go on. A third and a fourth arrive at top speed, from Heaven knows where, and dismount and draw up beside us, but always one behind the other, for the cavalry of the general staff circles screenwise during a battle. With the exception of Chalton, who has not found his company, the sergeant-majors have not come back. We send dragoons out as scouts, but there is nothing to the right or left of us, and before us, five hundred yards away, loom a hill and a forest. There are only the six of us in the valley, and it appears that we are in plain view.

A wave of coolness; the first layer of dew falls on our guns; the soldier of the search-light fires a last shot; the Enschingen steeple suddenly starts up on the right, far in the rear; a partridge whirs from under our feet — certainly the companies have not come by here. We slacken our pace and once more cross the brook, only to stumble into a long rectangle of carrots. We give way in discouragement before their impenetrable thick-

ets, and resolve to go no farther. We let the horses nibble them a minute; one of the dragoons tastes them himself, while Chalton and I, kneeling in their pungent leaves, fire the first shots of the regiment on two electric lanterns that twinkle out of the forest. He hits the first squarely, but mine does not go out till a few minutes later — when the electricity fails, he tells me. We feel no terror, but, little by little, laziness, indifference. Why go beyond these carrots and find still worse things — trenches of beets, perhaps? The man with the best ear puts it to the ground — nothing but the rustling of grass-blades, and the pawing of the horse on which the man with the best sight has climbed to look off. The man with the best conscience is already asleep. The colonel is studying his map. No doubt whatever that we are between the lines, and the companies must have stopped at one of the two villages behind us, Spechbach or Enschingen. Which one shall we return to? Which one is inhabited? We are in no special hurry, for we are no longer in any danger; our shadows have come back to us. Indeed, we are getting some fun out of this little adventure, which saves us from digging ditches or mounting guard back there, in the rear, and we are mean-

while enjoying a calm and a security never to be experienced in this war except when one is equally remote from both the French and the German sentinels, and with one's colonel. Every now and then a shot rings out, followed by another, shorter, dryer, as if the sharpshooter were hastening to pick up the man he had wounded. As we sit one opposite the other on the ground, we again form one of those rounded groups from which peace draws its life. We feel ever so clearly that no new era is beginning, and begin to smoke, and snap our fingers at Fate, and drink just as we did in the preceding era. The colonel decides on Spechbach . . . Spechbach it is. . . . A round pond has been set before the village, like a mirror before the lips of a sleeping man. Not a ripple, not a murmur . . . Spechbach is dead. . . . We advance.

. . . Now comes an hour which does not belong to the regiment, and which Captain Lambert has made us erase from our journals. Wounded and dead are what we find here. The sentinel who stops us has his forehead tied up in a reddened bandage — did the bullet, the one bullet, find its mark? In the first house numbers of wounded have established themselves in very

illogical fashion, the most seriously hurt on the second floor, as if they were afraid of flood being added to bullets. On a bench before a farm, an officer lies asleep, with a layer of bloody cotton on his breast. It is n't one of our commanders. His regimental number is one unit less than ours, and to reassure us he wears it everywhere he can — on his cap, his coat-collar, his shirt-collar: Fate has missed us by just one.

"Where do you come from?" asks the colonel.

He wakes and gives us mechanically what was this very morning — before he had come back from death itself — the right answer.

"From . . . from Chambéry."

Then he sees the five stripes.

"The colonel . . . the colonel is dead," he says.

It is my cap he is now staring at with his puzzled eyes, looking for my rank under its cover; possibly he does not consider it exalted enough to add, "The sergeant . . . the sergeant has been killed," so he drowses off.

We start on again. Chalton has a little Chambéry blood on his hand. He shows it to his dragoon, to make him believe he is wounded, and he thinks so himself, every time he lights a fresh cigar.

III

WAR IS LONG

Bernwiller, August 20.

We occupied Enschingen at exactly midnight, and were off to Bernwiller by three o'clock. A warm, peaceful day. I am put in charge of the hostages who have gone to sleep in some hay-carts — all but a nervous mayor who should be celebrating his birthday, and whose family are waiting for him; he sits lamenting on the open planking of the floor long after all the others have fallen through, under the weight of their own sleep. We organize our forces, we deploy, we dig trenches opposite Enschingen, as if we had no other object in this war than to take this village once a day. Breakfast with Devaux at an old Alsatian's, a deaf-mute who is eager to serve us, protected as he is by his infirmities from any denunciation for treason.

The discovery of a hen's egg, and then a duck's egg, brings us by lunch-time to the idea of the omelet which we prepare at the house of two German twin sisters. At last we have the

impression of being conquerors! The least word from us sets this pair of likenesses off at a run, colliding as they go: blonde and brunette, both to do our pleasure. On the walls, with their gray paper, we note some square patches of a lighter shade. Evidently they were once covered by picture-frames — indeed, one might reconstruct the whole Imperial Family, according to their more or less faded hue. I scare the slaves to death by asking them where they have hidden these portraits, and Devaux, with no malicious intent, puts questions that are now threatening, now polite: Has the Emperor really got creeping paralysis? What are their Christian names? How is the war going to end? What does the word "*gemütlich*" mean? They answer only the polite questions, but do so in the terror that the sacrilegious inquiries have roused: their names — tremblingly — are Elsa and Johanna: *gemütlich* means, "when all is well, when all is gay." "Yesterday *ist es gemütlich*," says Devaux, by way of example.

"*Ja*," they reply, "*ja*."

One has only to dangle the word "*gemütlich*" before a German woman's eyes to make her answer with these joyous brayings.

My company is occupying Henner's house and park. All the men are stretched out in the hollows in the lawns, or under the shade of the bushes, and are sleeping on their backs and sides, with their knees bent or extended. In fact they give us all the pictures that Henner would have painted, had the shrubbery been inhabited by soldiers instead of by red-haired women. Jalicot has visited the château; he found nothing there but two enormous paint-brushes, — one cherry, the other salmon, — Matisse's brushes. All the pictures have disappeared from the walls, as at Elsa's and Johanna's; but the mirrors remain. Since leaving Roanne we had only seen ourselves in little round two-cent mirrors which barely showed us one eye, or the parting of our hair. So we examine ourselves thoroughly, before I go back to join the other sergeants, who are lying on the lawn. Stretched on my back beside them I listen to their talk of their wives, and when my turn comes, admire the photographs of Mme. Sartaut which her husband produces. I see her in bicycling costume, in her bathing-suit, leaning on a *prie-dieu* at the edge of a beach, and every time she is fondling a different dog; her profession is to take rich dogs to board.

There she is in a boat, with a dog that belonged to Sarah Bernhardt, and Sartaut talks of Sarah who earns a million a year, is over seventy, and has n't saved a penny: the woman, so his wife declares, has no sense of order. But the garish actresses, the stout South Americans whom the dog of the hour half reveals are nothing to us. It is the charming, clear-cut little Frenchwoman, with lowered eyes and trim figure, whom we love; it is somehow she who makes the impression that we are in Alsace a precious one.

At six o'clock we take our departure for Upper Spechbach. We are beginning an enveloping movement about the unfortunate Enschingen. Mulhouse has given less trouble: we learn that it is ours, and that eighty cannon and eight hundred natives were captured on the left. We insist that Captain Perret, who has his Joanne guide-book, shall read us the page on Mulhouse: "*The station is small, dark and inconvenient, in striking contrast to the luxurious post-office.*" We should like, too, to hear the page on Friburg, because it is toward Friburg that we are going. But Friburg is not in Alsace, in spite of the assertions of those who confuse it with the Swiss Friburg.

March with no event to mark it save the arrest of Babette Hermann, aged eighteen, who had gone to Bernwiller to have a tooth pulled, and wanted to go home in spite of the battle, because the Sister who acted as dentist hurt her so much; and got caught in the brigade, with the black ribbon that she must use on Sundays for her Alsatian bow tied around her swollen jaw.

Aspach, August 24.

Devaux is in a bad humor; he has nothing but a card from his wife, whom he married just before he left; she really might have written him a letter. He manages, however, to steal a mattress, on which five of us try to sleep. No bed-bugs, as we feared, but toward midnight a horse that comes into the house and snuffs at us; he gets a whack and stumbles out. At one o'clock the cooks establish themselves in our courtyard. It's absolutely no good struggling — all that we had managed to assemble in the way of a peaceful conscience, that first essential of sleep, they banish with the noise recommended in Algiers for driving off grasshoppers. I go out and sit down by their camp-fire; not the fire where their coffee is boiling, but their *feu de luxe*, their extra fire — they

always build two fires, as if they were making an ellipsis, not doing the cooking. Three or four soldiers are there already, some leaning over the flame, the rest turning their backs, for the warmth is slight, and does not penetrate even halfway through a man. In the region of the heart one stays frozen. We keep it up frugally, lighting each faggot from the faggot that is dying, so that the pile may last till morning. My drummer, whose face is illuminated, is having a discussion with a soldier whose face is in the shadow; he is winding up a story of which I hear only the last sentences: "I kill him with my lead cap" — "He had at least six hands" — "His blood was golden" . . . These fellows must be telling their dreams, unless the common man has a night language without logic or humanity. . . . Sometimes the faggot is green and smokes us out — but smoke is more or less heat. A little French star, quite still till then, suddenly begins to make signals to us. Toward three o'clock a sergeant-major comes by to see that the unnecessary fires are put out. In Paris they extinguish every other gas-lamp, but we don't obey; indeed, we say nothing at all, and he loses his temper when he finds himself opposed by shadows. Finally the

weak brother among us, the man who will kill wounded dogs on command, and break confiscated bottles of alcohol, stifles our fire by beating it with the faggot he was going to put on. We stay by the cinders, though, until they are chill, rubbing our fingers over the last coals. Then dawn arrives by a door that lets in a sharp north wind, too. We turn up our damp collars, and pull our cravats tighter. A cock crows. Only once, and day comes. Alsace too? We only have to deny Alsace once.

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* *

A long morning. I am officially chosen to buy garlic and onions for the battalion, for the Alsatian vegetables really have too difficult names. At eight o'clock, order to make ready to leave. Four hours of waiting follow, packs on our backs, and guns at ease. Clam's alarm-clock goes off in his pack, and the officers turn cantankerous, and refuse to let me get rid of my onions. I have fifty bunches left, which I finally hand out to the same company. At noon, the general staff makes up its mind to send us orders to start.

The sky has also settled its mind. It will be blue for ten minutes, and cloudy for the next ten.

The clouds, instead of looking like Asia and England, will imitate our comrades: there's Bernard, with his beard, and Lieutenant Pattin, with a real eye pierced to the blue beneath. We follow a valley road, very low in our spirits, for it is only the highways that lead to the cities. It appears, however, that we are going toward Friburg. The regiment winds and uncoils its length like a snake, so that every man of us sees the whole of it from his own place for the first time. A Louis XIV sun, with slanting rays, reserves all its gold for the supply company. The sappers sparkle, the telegraphers are ablaze, the artificer, like Danaë, bursts into a golden shower. Since the colonel has taken me for interpreter, my position during our marches is in the first rank of the company on guard, as sentinel to the four men at the head. There are eight companies, and the soldiers never change their conversation, so on every march I take up the conversation where it left off eight days earlier; that gives me thirty-two new comrades, the thirty-two biggest fellows in the regiment who hail me when they see me, and call out good-morning in the bivouacs. To-day it's the company where they always talk about the war. The men are trading precepts inherited from their

fathers who went through 1870: "Cut off the buttons of the prisoners' drawers"; "Stuff your boots with newspapers when there is a frost" — a whole innocuous science which it would have taken quite one day to learn; the War of 1870 will shorten this war by just one day.

I slip back to the next company, to little Dollero, who is twenty, the only soldier from the active corps in these three thousand reserves — a little poet buried in the middle of his section; he manages, however, to slip the edge when I pay him a visit. He thinks, too, that we are going toward the Rhine, although we are marching against the sun, that is to say, westward. He confides to me, active poet that he is, that he has been composing eulogies since morning (he is at the eulogistic stage); not eulogies in verse, he explains, but in rhythmic prose; marching at ease on the roads, though bad for rhymes, is favorable to tonic accents. To-day he has composed a eulogy for Petipon, one for the colonel, and one for our Cuban volunteer: *Cuba, dont nous ignorons la vraie forme, car seule la première carte de Colomb y est permise et, pour effiler l'île, Colomb fit cinq voyages.* He recites them all to me. It is his intention to compose, by way of preface, the eulogy

of eulogies — as he makes this last admission he suddenly falters, and looks at me with such wide and shining eyes that I divine his plan, and turn so self-conscious that I don't dare make any more gestures except in front of the "movie" camera.

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* *

What a strange itinerary! What can Michal be thinking of! A village bent into a right angle suddenly sends us back toward France. Then, by a series of acute angles, we go north again; then, over a piece of state highway, east. It looks as though we were anxious to escape from a French army, or a French magnet lying in wait for us in the next hollow. We rejoice to see the mountains rising between us and Belfort; we barricade ourselves with the Vosges against this force which is impelling us to return to France. We did not know that this was the day of Charleroi. . . .

All the trees and thickets of this heavy country now ease themselves by throwing off their shadows, and turn blue. As we come down each slope a many-folded valley is lit up for us at its foot, and then gradually goes out again; and all the leaves that will be yellow next month are bathed in sunshine. On the slate roofs of the church-

towers, sunbeams glance and shiver into fragments. At all the cross-roads, tempting signs point out Colmar, Strasburg, then Friburg — reducing the kilometres to the lowest possible figure, avoiding round numbers like department stores: 59, 99, 119. We cross a swift brook which wears its name on its bridge, as if it were a necklace: the Doller. Beyond the bridge, a house standing alone, as in France; a garden surrounded by walls, as in France. We are no longer used to seeing such places, and tremble for this lonely house — all the men have noticed it, and suddenly feel, framed within their minds, their house and meadow in Auvergne.

Toward night the sergeant who distributes the mail rides the length of the regiment on his bicycle to give out the *Bulletin des Armées* to every sergeant-major. I marvel at the first sentence: "*To-day, August 3rd, nothing new. England declares war on Germany.*" The *Bulletin* also contains the story of a tenor of the Opéra Comique who somehow got mixed up in a battle. "I should have preferred," he concluded, "to sing *la Tosca.*" At eight o'clock, we reach Aspach. I leave Dollero perfectly happy, for, in the midst of his eulogies, he has found an epigram. Épitalon,

Major Gérard's cavalry sergeant, who is wanting to get engaged, has just inspired it: —

Fasse qu'il prenne bientôt femme
Car, Apollon,
Je medite l'épithalame
D'Épitalon.

I sadden him by insisting that this is a eulogy, too, not an epigram . . . but here we are at Aspach. I halt with the secretaries at a big farm beside the road, and for the first time we give ourselves the treat of seeing our regiment file past. The four leaders — the face, as it were — of each company are the only ones to nod to me, except for the onion company, which is one long grateful smile.

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* *

A real woman at last! Till to-day — we have n't been through anything but villages and farms to be sure — only aged peasant women, the sort who die while they are puttering over the lamps, or hobbledehoys in homespun. None of those blonde notaries' wives with eyes of fire, the anguish and the delight of their husbands; none of those frenzied women of the jewelers' shops, so honest in their sudden passion (for soldiers buy

little jewelry), who, during the maneuvers, used to give us the impression of conquering Clermont-Ferrand or Issingeaux as soon as we had reached the suburbs. None of those velvet shirts edged with pink that even a child expects to see at the frontiers of the regions which are personified by women. And yet we had taken pains to enter Alsace on a Sunday — and after such a journey!

O Frenchwomen of the stations, how you all, the very least of you, live on in our memories! Lining our path, waiting for us at the stops of the trains, the chattels of each man of us, and his willing slaves; racing from the grade-crossings to the towns — it was downhill — to fill twenty canteens that were empty when you took them, but weighed twenty pounds when you returned over the uphill road; unable to resist giving two rolls of chocolate to every soldier — instead of only one — yet despairing when your supply was exhausted; bourgeoises, peasants, little girls with their English nurses — thus did you alternate along our railway line, like adventures in the lives of famous travelers.

Now a teacher, who had had every one of her pupils write and sign a "letter of good cheer" to the soldiers; next a butcher's wife, whose stock

had already been distributed, but who suddenly bethought herself of her preserves, and ran to her cupboards; then some young girls at a miner's station, — dark, slim, consumed by war, — already changing for our benefit the five-franc notes that they were to have kept all their lives as souvenirs; then, at two in the morning, a pair of timid cousins who noiselessly pushed open the door of our slumbering car, and trembled with joy to see it suddenly rouse itself, jump out on to the dark, sanded platform, and stuff its knapsacks with chocolate of which they proudly named the brand. And let not that fair statue, that golden head which studied every soldier's face and refused me a second glass of beer, — although I had again stood in line, — be forgotten either; or that heart-stricken wife, who watched the others from under the luminous acacias without lending a hand to help them — she could not bear to see us, yet could not keep away; she could not, in her fear and sorrow, name her husband's regiment, yet finally murmured it through her sobs.

A living hedge, a hedge of women, all the way to the frontier, all within a yard of us, — except the girl at Montceaux, who consistently refused to come near, — standing outside of the

train's trench, outside of their own lives, outside of modesty, ready, they, too, to die, and defying the express trains: all the women, in short, who hide behind each other in our lives, whose innumerable arms and gestures we had never seen till now — condemned as we are to worship a Hindoo idol — save through the one woman who was nearest to us. All that their own meager experience had denied them thus passed under these soldiers' eyes before their dangers began: the glum fellows learned what it means to live ardently, the egoists sampled the generous life, the weak tried the thrill of decision; for they had five minutes to scrape acquaintance, give their addresses, and go on again. But where were the Alsatian women? They seemed ready to allow Alsace to turn masculine, so far as we were concerned — to transform itself into a Berry or a Poitou, one of those provinces you would not feel obliged to make way for if you met her in person at a door. They were going to allow us to think that there was no truth in the three pictures which used to hang on the walls of our first schoolrooms — those pictures which have mingled and confused in our memories a little Alsatian girl, a Roman matron with her sons at her knee,

and a twelve-year-old Oceania with no clothes on. Often did this academic trinity stir my heart with unsatisfied longing. Shall I then forgive the little Alsatian — who is now as old as I — for hiding herself away, considering that I have often, very often, blamed little Oceania for not making the voyage to Europe for my sake?

But now at last I see her. She has come all by herself, with a three-year-old baby boy who does not look like any continent whatever; rather, with his grapes and pears, like a season. She displays him to me with all the pride to which a feminine symbol, who has brought a little male into the world, has a right. She is pretty and blooming, and holds up a broad countenance on which one's gaze can wander without immediately falling off the right cheek, or the left, or tumbling into the eyes. One may avoid looking her straight in the face and still not seem a deceiver. And she is called Müller, as she should be, although her first name is Parisian — Fabienne. She wears her hair in braids around her head, without the black Alsatian bow, but one divines from her slight accent that her real head-dress and her real first name are only laid by in the cupboard.

It is at her house that I sleep; in her salon, furnished at Strasburg but diversified with souvenirs of her only journey to Paris: an Eiffel Tower, a real one with a green lining; a photograph of the Alexander Bridge on a conch-shell — a reminder of everything that has given the Alsatians reason to be proud of us in the last forty years. A Tréport shell is the only object that was bought for love of beauty, unless it be a cornucopia of flowers carved in mother-of-pearl. How exotic do shells appear in the mountains!

August 25.

Alarm at four o'clock. It's the fault of the sun that was unexpectedly brilliant. Not a cloud, not a breath. Everybody predicts in loud tones that it is going to be fine, and is enchanted to learn it from his neighbor the next moment. From the doors, where the level rays strike in, we exchange remarks: that is to say, the sergeants do — a sort of caste-mood prevents us from speaking to any but our equals in rank in the morning. My corporal, who is insolent at night, does n't venture a comment, and the major, yonder, has got his secretary on the string: the poor fellow is nothing but a worried teacher when he

wakes, and has to recover his importance gradually as the day goes on: it is as if he had to pass his *licence* over again every day at noon, and his *agrégation* at four o'clock, with the result that his chief is full of consideration by twilight, and always invites him to dinner. The optimistic sergeants greet each other without waiting for a reply, simply taking for granted, in every sentence of their dialogue, the word "finely."

"How goes it?"

"And you?"

"That's great!"

At five the regiment is ready. From time to time comes the order to shoulder our packs; then, ten minutes later, the order to put them down again. Usual promenade of the buglers and drummers who don't know where they belong, and are sent by every captain to a different end of the village. They stop at the town-hall, the presbytery, and the château, as the band does on New Year's Day in the provinces. Calls are exchanged between neighboring companies; an elegant soldier, with waxed mustaches, comes to inquire formally of Corporal Pierlit if he is allied, as he puts it, to the music-hall queen — begs pardon for the mistake, and goes off as proud as if he

had paid a call behind the scenes at the Eldorado. A diversion: the sergeant with the mail. We all get out our pencils and sit down. The least lettered among us stretch out to do their writing, and the fellows that remain standing are egoists or orphans. When the cards are all finished, we bring our field journals up to date, and Barbarin asks me to lend him mine to copy. I hand it to him without making any objection, as he would not understand a refusal, and he transcribes with joy: "*Aspach. Burnt houses. Fabienne. Eiffel Tower.*" I explain that Fabienne is the name of my hostess, but he had already guessed it, and guessed, too, that she is very tall and thin. In exchange, he lets me read his journal, where, up to now, he has found nothing but orders and passwords to set down: "*August 19, Napoleon, Namur. August 20, Samain, Solferino.*" He offers to let me copy it, if I care to.

Finally we are off. I leave four druggists on bicycles of German make in the care of an artillery lieutenant. They insist that they are going to Mulhouse, as their villages are all out of aspirin. They also declare, when we call this in question, that their villages need quinine and aconite. Jalicot suggests bandaging their eyes, but they

politely protest, begging pardon as if he were offering them a headache plaster: it is aspirin they need. The artillery lieutenant winks at us.

"I won't let them go till after the retreat," he says.

The colonel is standing near.

"What retreat?" he inquires angrily.

The druggists grin, and Jalicot confiscates the bicycles. The lieutenant, standing at attention, is searching his mind for a synonym for retreat, defeat, and shakes his head impatiently when he finds that nothing but rhymes occur to him to-day. What's the use? We all see that our Alsatian campaign is over. The leaders know that we are being taken back to France. The soldiers understand — it is so easy to understand! — that as there is no further resistance in Alsace, there is no more need of conquering it. We are happy to be marching fast, to be on the *route nationale*, that leads us back towards France. The officers return my maps. At the first halt I get back Colmar, at the next, Strasburg: my right to the plans of these two round cities, whose age one tells as one tells the age of trees, is again admitted. We are already hunting for maps of Belgium, and

I am discussing Antwerp with Jadin, who is a chief steward on an ocean-liner; as I am an interpreter he feels obliged to talk English with me, and tells me he was at Portsmouth when peace was signed between Russia and Japan. Jadin, for his part, — as his voyage is over when the ship touches New York or Havre, — insists that this war is over because we have reached Mulhouse.

"As they say," he remarks in his rare English, "war is finished."

Where do they say so? At Portsmouth? The only thing that is finished is this campaign in Alsace, which we are bringing to an end, after two uneventful weeks, in a more or less dissatisfied frame of mind. We are abandoning Alsace, but we can't help feeling that she is abandoning us, too. Every orchard, every plane-tree, seems to us to be going back to meet the Harth Forest behind us — the forest that had earlier barred our way — and when we turn around makes haste to join its mass on the horizon. Already laborers strange to the region are reaping the wheat that is still standing high in the German fields, the fields whose masters ran away in the harvest season. A sudden turn to the left would bring us to France in an hour. The men's great

regret is that they cannot strike a Roman road which is marked on the map.

"There it is!" they say, as soon as the highway grows broader and harder, and when we stop, they glue their ears to its surface as if they expected to hear the Romans coming.

But Cæsar preferred to march in the shade, and skirt the little wood.

IV

A TRIUMPHAL DEPARTURE

August 25.

SUDDENLY, before us, on the threshold of the mountains, appears a city. It is so clearly a city, the city of our school geography books, half in the plain, half in the mountains, that we hesitate to enter it. Above it a mediæval fortress, its towers still in a state of almost perfect preservation, but leaning sideways, as in a mirage that has not been able to turn completely upside down. Never will the general staff, which keeps us away even from the county towns, allow us to approach this model city, with its Gothic cathedral in the middle, its factories on the right, its tiled roofs on the left. Captain Perret confirms the fact that it is a city, Thann. The signboards, which up to this time had only spoken to us of distant cities, suddenly announce: Thann, two kilometers. The houses are already close together, with little gardens and iron gates. We inquire: —

"And here, where are we?"

"At Thann."

"But down there, on the right, all those factories — is that Cernay?"

"It's Thann."

What a huge city! Perhaps, too, we are no longer used to seeing cities! And the balconies? Can one imagine anything more delightful and comfortable than the balconies! And the second floors, so dangerous in case of fall or fire, but so light! And the nursery gardens, with man-traps hidden in the shrubbery, from which, nevertheless, the wives and daughters of the stingy horticulturalists rush out with such eagerness that they are the only ones who forget to offer us flowers. On the sidewalks — how much there is to say about the sidewalks, too! — are collecting all the people who are ready at nine o'clock in the morning — the young girls, the children, the invalids; while the mothers and the servants, in their wrappers, wave to us from the back courts. But I lie: here are men in frock coats, and women in black silk dresses, who have got up and dressed themselves entirely in our honor. The whole of Thann acclaims us — so suddenly that at first we look at each other, and then stare in every direction to discover what victorious regiment may be marching through; we even think for a moment

that they are celebrating some victory won in the north. Nevertheless, it is really we whom they are looking at and touching. It is really we, the sergeants, who are being embraced. It is really I, whom an old lady singles out to salute from her window, bobbing a fresh courtesy every time I turn around, indifferent to all the others.

Thann is cheering us with the everlasting remorse of having met the first French regiment in silence, and as it must have acclaimed those who went through in the opposite direction a week ago. Little does it care. It does not want to notice that Michal, with his arms full of roses, is turning unhesitatingly at the first cross-roads and leading us toward France. That has its advantages: if we were going toward Germany we should not march through the whole length of Thann, or be obliged to make our triumphal entry into Alsace the day we leave it. All the small selfishnesses that the sight of a town encourages — the hope of a glass of beer, or a cake, or a cigar — are blotted out by its emotion. We cross it without eating or drinking. We invent a more martial gait, and our scattered bugles and drums hurry to join forces in front of each battalion. Our company is lucky enough to have been shaved this

morning: we square our shoulders and present our whole countenance to the least glance. The joy of being contemplated by eyes which want to find loyalty, wit, and courage in you! The colonel throws off his cap cover and displays his five stripes, Major Gérard his four, every captain his three. Soon each of us receives all the homage that is due to his rank, and our grades are uttered as if they were our names. We did not know how to enter cities; in five minutes Thann has given us the formula. Captain Perret, who occasionally steals a look at his Joanne guide-book when nobody is looking, explains the city to us so that we may appear to be already familiar with it, and tells us that Kléber was an architect here. Thenceforth, the soldiers admire every house as if it had been built by Kléber, — or, if they have poor memories, by Marceau or Hoche. "And the cathedral," they ask; "who built the cathedral?"

Thann, which none of us had heard of before the war, because on the map your name is drowned in the shadow of the Vosges; gateway of Alsace that none of us even imagined, which rises suddenly, all wooden roofs and bright geraniums, on our homeward path — how much we want to love you! From every house hangs a flag, just one, the

house's standard, an old flag dating from before 1870, with gold fringe, and silk so stiff and cracked from having been folded away in the cupboard that the most modest wind would shake it to bits. They are all huge, with new staffs; sometimes the red has been nailed next the staff, which makes the flag heavier and graver, but they are all so fragile that each one is watched over by its master, as you watch Chinese lanterns on a holiday, to see that they don't go out.

On every balcony, the old or bent person of the family, the one who only sees from high up and far away. Standing in their doorways, the shopkeepers relieve us of our vow of fasting and pour out the contents of their shops upon us — equal for the first time, for we need them all equally; Balouard, who has broken his eyeglasses, receives a whole series of lenses from the watchmaker. There are enough to last his lifetime, provided his near-sightedness grows worse every year. Children who have begged to run our errands come back with the bundle and the change, and hunt anxiously for their soldier, discovering that all the others look just like him. Artaud, who is a butcher by profession, waves his arms and cheers an ugly and cross-grained butcher behind a marble

counter; and as the latter cannot imagine that Artaud is a colleague, he suddenly believes himself attractive, and after that puts himself proudly forward. The optician has stuck flags in his wax head, as if it were a map. . . . Even my most slow-witted soldier, Bergeot, feels a stir of curiosity and asks his neighbor where we are. The latter calls out, so that the people of Thann may hear: —

"It's Thann!"

And he yells again, pointing out Bergeot to the people of Thann: —

"It's he! It's Bergeot!"

Next come some comfortable houses: the whole family is at the gate — the mother, the father with his shiny gold jewelry, the children taking off their hats as the officers go by. Next comes Saint-Thiébaut, around which we have to make a circuit to enter the heart of the town. The three-story tower is leaning — always the tendency to mirage. My soldiers, who are astonished to find the church smaller near to, ask whether this is n't a peculiarity of Thann. From the porch emerges an old woman in black, who had gone in for the six o'clock mass and throws up her hands at the sight of us. Then she pulls out her snuff-box,

the only remedy she has for so much emotion, and Tantôt asks her for a pinch; the tobacco is methylated; we all help ourselves and sneeze vigorously as long as the old woman can hear. Here is the former almshouse, now the town-hall. A fat concierge and a pink secretary acclaim us with joy.

Now we have reached the boys' school. What a lot of children are still there who refuse to understand that it's vacation, and war-time! At first they stand in a solid mass, but one by one surrender to the charm of a corporal, or a bugle, or a gun, and soon there is no one left in the boys' courtyard but little girls. Ten-year-old children, with great starched collars which make their heads stand out as if they had been sliced off five-year-olds, who on the very day of the declaration of war were given a hasty explanation of what France was, and what Germany was, and in an hour understood and learned how to hate; — they adore us. There are children with dogs, or cats, or sailor caps, with the whiskers that were associated in their minds with the return of the French; children with breastplates and little helmets, who tremble with delight if we give them our heavy arms to carry, and refuse to let us take

their guns in exchange. One of them has a black bandage over his eyes, and his friends are leading him along. A cruel doctor forbids him to see us!

"Those are infantrymen," they tell him. "They've got red trousers."

"Where do they come from?"

"From Mulhouse. Look, the tall sergeant is going to lend you his cap."

I give him my cap — a bit large; it covers his nose, but he doesn't realize it. . . . The whole company is soon relieved of its caps, its whistles, and its picture post-cards.

"Those are Roanne post-cards," we explain.

"And you," the people ask, "where do you come from?"

A chorus of voices calls: —

"From Clermont, from Paris, from Ébreuil. Five of us come from Ébreuil!"

They pretend to know Ébreuil, which has produced so many soldiers, and will search the map for it in vain when we have gone.

We are now opposite the orphanage — the orphans have aged; they are old people to-day, too weak to stand: the loss of one's parents leaves an ineradicable pang. A little girl is following us, going into one house and coming out of the

next one, like a wreath. We are marching in slightly broken ranks; in front of all the doorsteps stand pails, pails of wine or sweet drinks, according as the giver considers soldiers to be warriors or children. The only people to keep their calm in the midst of the delirium of the natives and the soldiers are the cavalry in cantonment here — cuirassiers and dragoons who stand in motionless groups, and watch their hostesses acclaim us with the indifference of legitimate guests. Not a door, not a window, is closed upon us. The houses are wide open even at the back, and one sees right through them to the gardens and the mountains. For already, quite close by, a high, wavy outline follows us, swelling on the horizon like the wake of our march.

It is midday. The sun, which has sufficiently lighted us on the right, now illuminates us on the left. And always we are greeted by the same cry of "*Vive la France*," which the children shout in a throaty fashion, as if it hurt them; it ends by moving us to tears, as if we suddenly understood it the hundredth time — Bergeot the thousandth. We answer with the same cry, but adopt their accent in spite of ourselves, and thus do not appear to be making a translation from the Alsatian.

It is closing-time at the factories, and the workmen escort us, calling us by our ranks, and give us their packages of cigarettes, which we insist on their sharing. One of them acts as our guide, explaining the factories and parks to us, telling us how many children the owners have, and who are absent or missing from the families at the doors: here a daughter is gone, married in France; there a former French senator, dead ten years since. He smiles when he learns that we come from Roanne. Roanne happens to be a rival city of Thann in the manufacture of woven and stamped goods. Roanne has lowered wages here; but he does not blame us for it. Jalicot inquires: —

"And the Germans?"

For the first time they give us the reply for which we have been begging for a month.

"Down with the oppressors! Long live liberty!"

We also make inquiries about the storks, for a deserted nest looms on a chimney, and beside it a little windmill, put there probably to keep the rats away while the lease runs; he answers with Alsatian precision: —

"We had thirteen last year. All Alsace has two hundred and seventy-two of them."

The sergeant-majors of the battalion foregather.

They are enchanted; here at last is the town they have vainly looked for during fourteen years of maneuvers, where they will get a civilian employment after they are retired. They ask if there is a tax-collector, or a controller. There is all that, and a customs office and station besides, not to mention hunting and fishing. At every street corner a tourist's signboard informs us of excursions as well. The sergeant-majors spell out the signs:—

"We'll go to Engelbourg, we'll go to Thannerhubel! One can come back by Albertsfelsen!"

Their Corsican accent stumbles over these knotty words.

But we are already in the suburbs. The houses draw apart, retreat from the road, back up to the river or the mountains. Young girls with round faces and black eyes give us country flowers in exchange for those we have received in the city. Finally we halt near a château whose owners come forward to greet the colonel. The girls are accompanied by a friend, an Italian cousin, whom they have dressed up in the Alsatian costume, whereas they themselves are French girls. Thus do the girls of Rouen think themselves unworthy to play the rôle of Jeanne d'Arc, and confide it to an

actress. Our Italian sticks a red geranium in every gun-breech, as methodically as if she were making cuttings.

We are off again. The men have begun to sing. Workmen and peasants, with little understanding of their feelings, they believe themselves joyous because they are moved. Choruses are formed; our kits, too, clink against the steel of our guns, and every man, cicada-fashion, makes a silvery sound on his own account in the sunshine. My company sings the *Chant du dépari*, modifying the name of Viala, however, for the benefit of Vialard, our fat corporal; and Artaud, who thinks this new song superb, comes in a pause to ask me to copy it for him. The valley is narrowing; there is an echo — this makes us sing the *Montagnards*. Every now and then two towns come together; here is Bitschwiller already, and Willer, although the sergeant-majors maintain that we are still in Thann. Every town honestly sets forth its altitude, and the height of the nearest mountain — you have only to subtract one from the other to free yourself from some lurking care. We cross the Thur. Here is Moosch, where our guide takes the wrong turn for the first time, and starts us on the road to Guebwiller. That will count as a quarter

of an hour's excursion, and will be deducted from our campaigns.

Next Saint-Amarin, where we make a long halt, in a meadow that lies below the river; its children come to survey us. We offer them cakes, for we have bought out the pastry-shops; but they refuse politely, saying that they are n't hungry, and accept only our biscuits, which they devour. The biggest remark aloud what the Germans would not be able to make: stacks of arms so quickly, fires so quickly. A little boy asks me for all the explanations that I used to demand of soldiers in my childhood: if there is a moral difference between silver and gold braid, and how you tell a second lieutenant from a sergeant-major. He had more or less despised sergeant-majors heretofore. I show him ours: Forest, always freshly shaved, with his opera-singer's eyes, and his neatly pressed uniform. That will long be a sacred rank for the children of Saint-Amarin. . . . The bugle sounds: "The Germans would not drink such boiling hot coffee so fast." He asks me to send him a line if I am wounded, and writes his address in my note-book: *Paul Schlumberger, Saint-Amarin, Alsace, France.* I find a visiting-card in my pocket-book and give it to him, although the corner is turned

down — for I had found, in the rue Falguières, the sculptress whom I had hoped to miss. It occurs to me now that Paul could only read my street there, not my city. But he must have guessed that it was a large one, and he might have written to me in the eleven French cities which have more than one hundred thousand inhabitants.

"The Germans would n't turn around to say good-bye." . . .

It is pouring in torrents. The mountains draw beautiful bluish forests all the way down to their bases, to protect them from the rain. The valleys widen and our eager eyes seek to plumb their recesses, but the showers blend their outlines. The towns are almost silent, and the Alsatian voices echo more faintly to our songs, as the mountain echo swells. From all the cross-roads debouch silent troops who have not crossed Thann, and travel through our noise without mingling with it, like the Saône in the Rhone. Now and then a soldier dashes off, finds his way into the back of a shop where a mute company is collected, and calls: "Long live Thann!" And the inhabitants of the city, though it be a city jealous of Thann, just blink their eyes without a protest.

We are following a railroad, which has no signs now because they were all German and — as it is also free of trains — serves as a path for the lame, who thus escape our jostling. Near a grade-crossing, with lowered gates which are raised only for the cripples, I meet Prosper, now an artillery scout. His horse, a famous one, Jean de Nivelle by name, remembers the last Grand Prix as he stands guard behind this enormous hurdle, and finds the starter even more clumsy than usual. Prosper recalls that, for the vacation before his Baccalauréat, he had an "Entrance into Alsace" as a subject for a narrative. He did not take a roundabout route; he entered it by way of Strasburg, and pursued to the top of the cathedral tower a German general, who only escaped him by jumping off into space; and I could n't scoff at him because I, too, when I was in the fourth year, had failed in my "Entrance into Alsace." I had made mine through the towns on the other border, through Wissembourg and Freschwiller, according to the tales of 1870, and I described them backwards, as Chateaubriand did his Greek journeys. Another step and I should have been in France. One saw in a moment that I had never really gone into Alsace at all.

The rain has stopped. We reach Fellering at six o'clock, and remain with the second battalion which is to stay there in cantonment, while the first battalion continues to Urbès. The officers establish themselves at a hotel, and I rejoin Épitalon and de Fraix in another inn, where we dine. This one is the German inn. Its terrace overlooks the whole valley; they have selected it as they select a howitzer emplacement, and the view includes everything that the heaviest mind can take in: the church-tower, a mediæval fortress, and the moon. Evening tucks a German sky around this Alsatian earth, a sky low-hanging and tightly stretched, for it is the farthest end of the sheet. An enormous moon, modeled on the face of Simplicissimus. If it could drop like a shooting-star, what a giant wish to wish against Germany! A sad meal, too, this German supper: these bilberries, this salad without oil, and this Viennese veal. Must I go to bed with a taste of Prussia in my mouth, after so pure a day? No beer; a *Kellnerin*, very down-at-the-heel, comes shuffling in to tell us so — dry daughter of the Rhine. It bothers me to have my comrades and my soldiers take this corner of Brandenburg for Alsace. They unreservedly admire the red and

black beams of the ceiling, and the arms of Otho of Bavaria on the stained-glass windows; they admire the playing-cards which have gold-beveled edges, and aces with photographs of cities, and flowers, and actresses — they scarcely know where they are, for three of them claim to have the king. Same difference in matches, cigars, and stamps. As they have been accustomed since their birth to the changeless French cards, they have the impression that this is the country of liberty and imagination. They gossip with the *Kellnerin*, who knows barely enough French to answer them, and whom they call "little Babette," although her name is Magda. They think it charming of her to accept a seat in their laps. They kiss her. One of them, writing to his parents in a corner, begins his letter thus: "I write you in the sweet embrace of a little Alsatian girl."

I sleep in her bed — the Alsatian's; a very abbreviated bed, which luckily has an open foot, so that my legs can stick through; a bed such as seals use at the circus. I lie down in my boots, but I take off my greatcoat and, like confetti on Ash Wednesday, the flowers of Thann fall out on to the rug by my bedside, which absorbs them and gives me large German flowers in exchange —

yellow and garnet. The room has a curse on it; I cannot make a gesture which is not borrowed from a writer of the German romantic school; if I open the window a ray of the moon caresses my right cheek, my hair (which has curled for the first time), and the bull's-eyes of the stained-glass windows, and I feel myself the image of Schwind. I repair my revolver, reading a blue letter by candlelight, and turn Werther. I get even with modern Germany by tearing up a picture of Tirpitz, and one of an unknown student with three saber-cuts, and hide the fragments in Magda's shoe-box, on the left-hand shelf. In the distance a muffled trumpet blows. The most martial of the echoes replies with a bugle-note. . . .

I hear a bugle in Alsace. . . .

How I pity my friends in China!

Portuguese Days

To Major Carlos de Albuquerque de Santa Rosa y Ovar

As I was in dress uniform, the whole population followed us. First the little girls, carrying the little boys — for in your country, too, the sisters are somewhat older than their little brothers — in deep baskets on their heads. In Maureria, the girls were naked; in Lapa, where the German Embassy had formerly protested, they had been swathed in figured cotton. Then the beggars, whom one recognized by a copper badge, with the word *mendigo* engraved upon it. Then the fisher-women of Ovar, with ropes bound about their waists, like your monuments of the time of Manuel; they have eyes on either side of their faces, so that to see me they had to walk past me instead of following me. The women who sell fuchsias — for one never steals fuchsias in Portugal — deserted their shops for us. And finally came the Belem orphans, in pink smocks striped with carmine, all of whom, in their ignorance of the years which must separate parents and children, certainly wished just now that I were their father.

"What do you expect?" you said. "It's the same in Paris when a Portuguese comes to town."

They were all barefoot, and walked in their sunshine with less noise than Esquimaux in their snow; when a heel echoed near us, we were aware that some less devoted being was going by. And so it proved: it was either one of those Spaniards who have come to Portugal to spy out how their three rivers end; or the policeman whose duty it was to herald my passing with "Long live war" and "Life to Life"; or else it might be Reigini, the prima donna of the Italian company, who had stifled her neck and wrists in fur against the clasp of her lovers, and reddened her lips and the corners of her eyes with the same stick of rouge. There was, moreover, an old gentleman in boots who insisted on accompanying us, and even stopped me, in the height of his admiration, to point to my saber and inquire — in a French that like yours was innocent of verbs — why the sheath was bruised.

"War? Battle?" he inquired.

"No," I replied, "valise."

By the tramway, and then the funicular, thus dispersing first those who had only one penny, then those who had only two, we climbed to

Alcantara with the rich alone. To introduce Lisbon to me, you placed me at a chosen spot among the palms where each tree hides a factory chimney — they were smoking; then near the Estrella Church you made me walk forward in a circle till the openings in its two bell-towers came opposite each other, and I could run them both through at once with an arrow. From there, as I was tired, you consented — but only on condition that in the afternoon we should see the castle built of fishing-rods — to go down again toward the harbor. The long squares of your city, with their wavy black mosaics, looked as if they had been sprinkled with fresh ink. On every house-front the Louis XV of the windows and the Chinese arabesques of the roofs struggled hard to come together, but one set of scrollery seemed to recoil timidly before the attack of the other. In the perpendicular streets tiny babies swaddled tight to the shoulders were lying on the pavement; their huge heads rested on the sidewalk, and pivoted them out of the way when automobiles passed by.

Glued to the faïence that decorates the lower stories of the houses were naked little girls, and on the topmost balconies — there was nothing on the floors between to soften the brusque transition —

stood your passionate young women, with their glistening temples, who wear yellow gloves and muslin dresses, with black stockings and white felt hats. Young girls, attracted by the stir we made, stuck their heads out through the iron gratings of the ground-floor windows, and taken prisoner in the bars, just shut their eyes when we stared at them. If we came nearer they turned deaf — nearer still, breathless and pale.

Then through mean streets, where a parrot hangs above every door and shrieks out its enormous number, our procession advanced, describing the appropriate geometrical figure about every historical point — a circle around the pavement where the King was killed, an oval about the bench whence Pombal drove the Jesuits into exile — until it finally reached the Colonnade on the edge of the Tagus. We leaned on the balustrade of the river — for it flows on the level of the Square, or rather above it, since one has to climb two steps to embark — and you showed me the Vasco-da-Gama, your Admiral's cruiser, whose officers cannot appear in Lisbon except on horseback; the Adamastor, which was carrying the school for illegitimate little girls to the other bank for a holiday — the mothers were saying

tearful good-byes, and we heard the expectant fathers shouting joyfully on the far side of the river; finally you pointed out the boat without a deck, where the copper letters that composed the names of the sixty confiscated German ships are being piled up indiscriminately, so that your *littérateurs* may find the same number of Portuguese names there — names of poets and kings. Now and then we caught under the swell the glimmer of long streaks of light — crossed steel rails, deep below there, that shift boats toward Halifax or Pernambuco; and monstrous barks kept passing by, barks with crooked prows, and rusty sails, and cyclopean eyes painted in front — and one eye was not enough, each boat had two.

"Roman barks!" I said.

"No," you replied, "Portuguese."

A cloud veiled the sun, melted away again; and Lisbon opened and shut like a fan. All the plaster that had crumbled off the walls of your city was being tossed into a boat on the quay. The air quivered in zigzag lines about the flagstaffs on the walls of your palaces, taking them for seismographs. The dogs were sneezing, hesitating to plunge into this peppery sea. The eleven o'clock processions went by: they were Unionists

demonstrating angrily because decorations had just been restored on account of the war; and the death penalty as well, for everybody, including those who were decorated. Yonder, the diplomatic corps was putting one of its three wives aboard the steamer: the attachés, in uniform, were singing the verse common to all national hymns; the second secretaries were bringing farewell gifts — they carried rolls of blue linen stamped with red baskets, and their pockets overflowed with inkstands with bells on them, and ivory Saint Madeleines (whose little silk frocks had been packed in the trunks) in their nakedness. There came along finally the other officer of my mission, implacably pursued by the natives because you had explained to him that one never gives to Portuguese beggars. You told him one must say, "Keep patience!" at which they stop short as if a prescription for life had been suggested to them for the first time. But my fellow-officer said, "Keep patience," to newspaper boys, to shopkeepers, to venders of sole, to all those for whom your phrase was a command to follow him; and so they followed patiently, waiting till he knew the Portuguese for "buy."

The air was burning, but licked by tongues of

ice. Motors were coming down the Avenida at top speed, those of the high officials, who are not afraid of lawsuits, turning in a zigzag around the lamp-posts in the middle. Negroes armed with rubber hose were caressing the least swollen palm-trees; I asked you if they were blowing them up, and you explained that they were watering them. On the Rocio everybody was already collecting in front of the Green Hat Club, to stand or take his ease opposite the station clock; for they were going to change to winter time, go back from noon to eleven o'clock, and receive as a siesta an hour which at home the State gives out in sleep. The innumerable watchmakers of the town, half emerging from their black façades whose doors are bordered with gray-blue, were in a great state of excitement; they insisted that the large hand must be turned eleven times, stopping even for the halves. On the café terraces, all the fathers, with those three daughters whom they take out for a walk by the ocean at sunset to see the "green ray" appear, were smiling with expectation and sensuous pleasure. One minute of twelve. Up went our spy-glasses. . . . Noon. The little hand simply turned back an hour, and the disgusted watchmakers went in again. The

fathers became suddenly sad, the daughters affectionate. The fair Brazilians, who had put into port for an hour that proved superfluous for their ends, smiled at this European time which folded up like a hammock to take them in; and the blue-browed Orientals, wrapped in a redoubled laziness in the depths of their calashes, turned their carriages toward us, so as to avoid having to turn their eyes. In one word — for you know everything — you explained to me why these superb beings smile at French officers, why they were gay or sad, talkative or mute, why they glittered with jewels, why one of them had both breasts bare.

"*Cocottes*," . . . you said.

*
* *

Your charming country was the first I had seen in two years where there was no war. It took me a long time to find my eyes of peace again; a long time not to feel within me, when an old woman laughed, or a happy person passed, the joyful sense that a son was home on leave, or that a wounded man had been saved. I used to dash toward a show-window which had suddenly drawn a crowd as if I were going to see ten thou-

sand prisoners, or Saint-Quentin recaptured — and it was only a china dog which bobbed its head and stuck out its tongue. When you presented me to one of your friends, I replied with infinite precaution, infinite scrupulousness, as one must at home, to avoid all risk, speak to strangers as if they had been alone in the world since their birth. I chattered with grandmothers and their grandsons without seeming to suspect that a son, or a son-in-law, had ever been in the least necessary to the fashioning of their group. Sometimes a beggar used to shake his wooden bowl outside my window at dawn, and I waked with a start later in the morning under the impression that I was being invaded by one of those groups of girls who collect money on our Serbian, Belgian, or Roumanian Sundays. A fine country yours was, where machinists and piano-movers had not become — to the confounding of art by the war — poor feeble creatures, and where women in offices and tramways did not mark the place of men who were absent, or a woman in half-mourning that of a man who was "missing." We were to live there as I used to live three years ago, in a country where death does not exist, plunging our arms casually into human hearts,

talking of the past and the future as in a children's country. . . .

"Salute these officers, for they bring us war!"

Thus did your generals present the three Englishmen and the three Frenchmen of the mission to the troops. This took place on the fields worn bare by squad drill, squares which the world over are as like as two bald heads, for they show the very woof of the earth. First at Thamar, between the stationer's shop and the Hindoo cloisters, which were visited by bees and swollen as if the whole swarm had attacked their marble columns; then at Braga (your only city where the shadow of the houses does not make a Chinese pattern in the street), in the market-place, where they had collected the thousand-year-old boundary stones of the Roman road and set them — more happily than the contemporary Latin dates which used to be so closely crowded in our schoolbooks — only a few feet apart; finally at Evora, where young chimpanzees are taken to board — for they die off everywhere else in Europe. "Salute these officers" . . . At the words civilians bared their heads, and we took our hands out of our pockets in proof of innocence, like men who are nursing a concealed revolver.

But the English general wanted to congratulate your officers. He was the man who commanded the British army at Tsing-Tao, and he had made a bet with Dobell of the Cameroons as to what English general would enter German territory first. Both got there the same day, at the same time; but ours was proclaimed the winner, because of the difference of latitude. Full of benevolence, eminently correct, he approached the Portuguese colonel and you were his interpreter.

"Tell the colonel," he said, "that I thank him."

"Colonel . . ." you began in Portuguese, and you were off on a vast discourse where I gathered the most diverse words: the name of Rome, the name of London, the names of fruits, Christian names — for among your people, where there are only five family names, you adore Christian names. The colonel bowed low.

"Major . . ." he replied, and he too uttered a sentence full of abstract words; then another with the names of cities, French names this time; he got excited and flushed at the word "Joinville-sur-le-Pont." You nodded approval, and when he calmed down, and brought his speech to an end, you said, turning in our direction: —

"The colonel thanks you for your thanks."

Thus the whole thing happened between us two, and you gave us back our amiable word after hugely inflating it, both of you, and squeezing it dry again. It is thus that we give back in our old age the little sentiments that were confided to us as children — give back, empty of all their meaning, the words that were love, pride, and friendship in our lives.

Then we visited the barracks, where the higher officers looked happily at each other whenever a reservist had brought a lace pillow with him, or a horse had been named Zeppelin. Children followed us with the Lisbon papers, which had black borders when some French senator, Trouillot, or Naquet, had died the night before. You took advantage of the fact that your Portuguese tongue is word for word like my native Limousin, to teach me to read the sonnet that is published every day on the first page, and after that I knew how to say Ulysses in Limousin, and Agamemnon, and Desdemona. The road followed both the sea and the river, which was shut up in its aqueduct; or else it ran between high walls, pierced with acres of barred windows whose shutters the laborers opened to see us pass. From their balconies

the women talked with young men who lounged about in the middle of the street; they pronounced the *s's* without blurring them, and, after Spain, the sudden freedom and frankness of this letter was as poignant as if some pretension, some reserve in the women themselves, had vanished away.

On the half-useful days (so they call Saturdays) our automobiles had to crawl behind a long train of gossiping couples, for your country is the one in Europe where people move most; when we finally passed them I knew the last stick of their furniture, and you the least of their thoughts. All that I had had to imagine for myself when I was a schoolboy was here about us: archbishops' palaces with pink cupolas and gardens with false perspectives; nymphs whose breasts had been swollen by yearly coats of plaster; Indian corn filling the valleys; the enormous river drained by the ebb-tide, and purple between its porcelain dykes and its eucalyptus trees; the wood of bananas and cypresses with its allegories in faïence — there was Poetry nursing her goose, Rhetoric who gave one a false welcome with her open arms and her crossed legs — and another wood with marble animals upon which Time, who

had been enclosed there for a space, had inflicted all that the statues of Venus or Niobe endure from him: the dog was headless and pierced with arrows, the monkey had lost his arms, the rhinoceros had only a torso. Between the palms and the olives some gunners — to deceive I know not what pirate — were painting blue the lighthouse that had yesterday been red; and the trees were peopled, as one perceived from the warbling, by tropical birds that had escaped from the ships. All this brought me to the very point, to the most distant point where my childish longings had ever carried me, and I moved an inch or two nearer you, to avoid touching, especially with all this fresh paint upon it, one of the most intimate panels of my life.

II

The Grand Tour

The Grand Tour

I

FROM THE VOSGES TO BELGIUM

Ramonchamp, August 27, 1914.

My battalion has been unfairly treated to-day. Our first stop has not been made in a town, and we thus miss all the others, for they are regularly spaced, an hour's march apart. These are towns where people do stop, nevertheless; they have casinos, and tourist offices, and we learn from marble tablets that Montaigne once halted at Bussang, and Talleyrand at Saint-Maurice. We might forgive the last two for being cleverer than we, but the second battalion's luck annoys us. It can buy at the grocer's shops — other regiments having already emptied them of supplies for adults — all the things that only children knew how to find in them before the war: nougat, raisins, and caramels. It drinks pale wine, eats cold trout, and takes the addresses of Lorraine families who will be its friends for life; this all the

way along a road that has given us only the memory of a pair of round mountains, the very ones whose curves we timidly compared to the outlines of a young breast, in our narratives of the third-year classical course — it was our first metaphor, and the third-year modern class did not venture so far.

From the moment when we emerged through our frontier tunnel, as through a spy-glass, into France again, the day after our triumphal departure from Thann, we lost all curiosity; we see nothing more. Captain Perret has shut up his guide-book. The country turns simple and green, and, save for the two summits on our left, still misty and symbolical, yields its other beauties candidly — its meadows, its brooks, and its granite. Sometimes, glittering across a ploughed expanse, a solitary furrow. At last the men have packages of tobacco and need not crumble their cigarettes to fill their pipes; sometimes one of them stops at the edge of the road, and lights his pipe by taking a deep breath that sucks in his two cheeks, which makes him look as if he were silently laughing; and when he is grave again, surrounded by wreaths of smoke, goes back to his place.

France is a land of acquaintances. In the square at Saint-Maurice I catch sight of the house of old Haltesse, the commercial salesman of *papier d'Arches* whom we used to love to take to the Weber Restaurant, so as to call out his name and thus bewilder the waiters — they never, in their deference, dared call him anything but "Monseigneur." As we left le Thillot, there stood Madeleine Dollet, with whom I once lunched, and danced, and argued that Mozart was a Dutchman; she was distributing newspapers, the *Petit Journal* to the soldiers, the *Matin* to the sergeants, the *Figaro* to the officers. When she heard an unknown soldier with spectacles and a mustache call out, "How goes it, Madeleine?" she must have looked herself all over, with her fine oval eyes, to see what could have given her name away.

The letters on the fronts of the shops, which were a little weak-kneed and uncertain in Alsace, have now recovered their assurance. The French vowels, in their purity and loneliness, take their places suitably between Roman consonants. In le Thillot the houses are numbered, and on the façade of each is nailed a blue enamel plaque with enormous Arabic numerals on it. Bardan, beside

me, reads each name aloud, giving it a flattering emphasis when the proprietor is standing under it; similarly, in the country, he cannot resist applying to every tree and bird the French word that hits it off best: —

"Here is the green-finch of the brook. Here is the juniper of Ireland."

Dear Bardan, he clings to me nervously to-day; Bourbons from the South cannot hear their fears openly stated without turning faint. The people of Vichy or Gannat change countenance at the least hurt to their feelings; in one minute their souls are torn to bits — we have cruel sport with Bardan which would not go down with people from Moulin or Nevers.

"We'll be back again in six months," we carelessly remark.

"In six months!" repeats Bardan, turning pale and tremulous. But he suddenly gets the point and in a flash is as blooming as ever.

"Women are all unfaithful, horrible, ugly!"

"Women?" repeats Bardan, who is married, and begins to stammer in his dismay. . . .

Toward three o'clock, definite halt at Ramonchamp, in the middle of a vast amphitheater crossed by the Moselle, which is vainly trying

to separate the villas from the ordinary houses, and create Ramonchamp City and Ramonchamp Farms. The cemetery overlooks the river. From the tombs of the rich one gets the view, from the tombs of the poor one sees the station. The air is sharp and clear. Every dooryard has a gushing spring which flows down under the open sky to the Moselle — it is the houses, here, which supply the river with water. Every least trickle has worn the earth away to bed-rock; in this soil the biggest river could not reach a greater depth. We take a look at the church; the children are coming out of catechism, and shake hands with me, in the porch, one after the other; I feel obliged to stay till the very last one, like a holy-water font.

Then, after dinner, I go up with Bardan to my company, which is quartered on an estate on the slope of the mountains. The sergeant-major counts our cartridges, and pays us eleven francs; as it is the end of the month we feel as if we had finished a war and were dividing the spoils. We come back under innumerable stars; in every farm, too, a light is twinkling, for we have been scattered over this plateau as the regiments that were to be changed into constellations used to be

spread out in Hellas, after a victory. Bardan, moved by the night, has taken my arm, and refuses to believe that I may be killed. He dissuades me from death as if it were suicide, or as if my being made a sacrificial offering for the regiment were in question this evening. He wants to hear me swear that I shall get through. Does the fact that I won't swear mean that I have a presentiment? I reassure him, touched myself, and promise to live a hundred years. But a sentinel has fired in the distance, and he abuses the man as if he were aiming at me.

In front of the town-hall, a group of soldiers with lanterns is reading the August *communiqués*, copies of which the deputy-mayor has just brought. He is pasting them up himself in the proper order, listening to the comments of the soldiers, and explaining the names of Belgian cities according to an itinerary of his own invention: Brussels, 350 kilometers from Nancy; Louvain, 600 kilometers from Lyons; Malines, 500 kilometers from Dijon. The men, tired out, undress themselves gradually as they read, beg the deputy to read aloud, and listen while rolling up their puttees, and folding their neckties. Some of them interrupt when the news is good, — when

Saarburg is taken, — others when the news is bad, and it is lost. Sometimes, when Alsace and Mulhouse are in question, they stop short, blinking at the proper names they know, and listen as motionless as if they were already stripped for sleep or death. . . .

August 28, 29.

Tryon lived in a great château, where he raised horses and dogs, and hunted the badger, and he was expecting a son next month. Viard had received a present of a desk of African mahogany on the eve of his departure for war. Trinqualet's brother, who worked in a tailoring establishment in Paris, was to spend his vacation in Auvergne, and dress the whole family for nothing. . . . All my comrades are talking of their happiness today. Biset runs into a door as he brings in the report, but it is happiness all the same that gushes out of his huge skull, in the midst of his imprecations; he informs us that he is engaged. But the fellow who loses most in this affair is Sartaut, for he had just become heir to the most egotistic man in France — that is, to everything one needs to make one happy: a cellar with two bottles of every variety of wine, a garden where a monkey

and an antelope live peaceably together, and some shares in the P–L–M, which means that the Sartauts can travel free. As soon as the war is over, instead of living on the Ouest-État, they will establish themselves on the Brunoy line where they will see nothing but the trains that belong to them.

We are encamped in the schoolhouse and are keeping school hours, as we keep factory hours in the workshops. Lunch at eleven o'clock, collation at four, and recreation in the courtyard. Captain Lambert writes his letters at the teacher's desk, and the rest of us squeeze with some difficulty into little desks soldered to their seats, pivoting with them to talk to each other, or to take the pupil's composition books out of their drawers. My schoolboy's name is Félix Bertrand, and judging by his last exercise he is more likable than clear-headed; the class had to explain diminutives in *on: chaton, nègrillon, ourson;* Félix, whose mind was wandering, did not understand what his teacher meant: "*Un petit chaton est un chat,*" he explains; "*un petit nègrillon, un nègre.*" Through the window we see the church, from which the spring of holy water is trickling, and see, too, everything that happens on the steep streets — a

hard-boiled egg, for instance, rolling downhill with a squad in pursuit.

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* *

It is midnight. We are rumbling along in the train. The assistant station-master at le Thillot has shown me — before the colonel too — incomprehensible attentions that I have found embarrassing. He wanted to brush me, he tightened my straps, he offered me a first-class carriage. Very mysterious, for he called me sergeant all the while. It has done us this much good — that we are only six in a second-class carriage; Dollero, Clam, Danglade are already asleep, while I sit up with Devaux, who is preparing the return of effectives for to-morrow, and at every stop recopies the pages that I dictate. Outside the sky is black, but the stars are sharp, and the air clear. The railroad seems to be making a wide circle about the firmament itself, and the station signboards, lonely under the stars, present the most lying earth-names: Feldrupt, Rupt-sur-Moselle, Maxonchamp. I had always wanted to see Maxonchamp, but far from bringing me near it, this lunar station renders it inaccessible, for this life at least. So many stops that the return is ended

well before Épinal. We have taken stock of the whole battalion; not a sleeping man in these fifty carriages whose name has not been spoken tonight. Humble names, litany of the regiment and of Auvergne. . . . We even take the trouble to search out Lieutenant Jourdan in his compartment; he is new to the battalion and we found him still wide awake, smoking away, as if he had foreseen our doubt.

Épinal. The turn-tables wake us up. It is light. The doors of the cars squeak open — some of them stick and we have to let out the men who are calling and banging inside. One car opens on to the fields, instead of on to the station, and one thinks for a moment that the world is still asleep. The night has left a white mark on everything that was blacker than itself, the roofs of the cars, the tarred signs. Each man parts his best friend's hair, and little mirrors are handed around with many precautions — the most precious particles of the new day. Eyeglasses come out next, and the first keen look of the morning is for one's self. Some territorials are burning coffee at the corner of a shed, and the whole station smells of burnt coffee as the Place de l'Odéon does on Wednesdays. Dollero, cramped

and uncertain in his mind after the night, gets astride an automatic turn-table, and to recover his balance, and right his poor fate, pushes it toward Remiremont, or Paris, or Basle.

Long day in the train. We are going south by a strategical railway. Strategy draws its lines around mountains, thus avoiding tunnels, and goes up rivers to their sources to avoid bridges. We are ambling through a fat, green country where cattle and horses abound, and unknown animals, black striped with red, which the people of the region call *lubards*. We follow a lazy valley where the inhabitants have not been equal to thinking up names for their villages; a watering-place is called Baths, a port on the Saône, with many factories, is called Factory-Harbor; we pass Fair-Fountains, and By-the-Church in the distance. Never any stations; our line is always isolated, and we see only the backs of the towns; whenever the strategists were unable to avoid a city, we go through it under full steam, blowing our whistle.

Suddenly, however, the stations multiply, with their covered platforms which the P–L–M was painting black at the end of July; some of them — a bad mark for their old station-masters — had

not got beyond the red coat on the day of mobilization. In the sidings, cars overflowing with all the things people were sending each other at four o'clock on the 31st of July: baby carriages, dynamos, and cement-trees. The commissary officers, to protect their white cap-bands from the cinders, have had them glazed with iron. Next Frétigny; after that Velle. Next, as if to cancel our own train, a train of soldiers which insists it is going to Thann, whence we have come. Then, overflowing with convoy, bristling with cannon that have been unmuzzled for the stop, appears Gray on its hill. The women and children, who are once more sitting all along the line, get up when the civilian trains go by to give them the letters which have been handed out to them from the military trains. Small boys catch our canteens on the fly, and we calmly cross the train-sheds, in the certainty that they will appear almost as quickly as ourselves at the other end, with the bottles full. The youngsters who specialize in white wine beam with pride at our surprise. We go downstairs and at the doors, which are guarded by sentinels, the most inquisitive of the soldiers can see, fifteen feet away, the first row of the most inquisitive civilians.

Now the towns are turned in our direction. The soldiers are sitting on the edges of the open cars, and the train goes on real red legs. The bushes scratch our knees, or — in the districts where the state engineer takes good care of his hedges — caress them. The sun, like the smoke, unreasonably changes sides, and we impatiently watch for the woods which will bring us shade. From Gray to Dijon again, the journey that we made by night three weeks ago; little girls whom we don't remember ever having seen recognize the regiment by its number, anxiously ask what has become of soldiers whose addresses they took, and reproach Bertet for having let his beard grow.

We laugh and joke, as we did on our first journey, without noticing that the women have changed; that some have grown thin, and some command while others obey. We, who have not seen a single dead man, are quite unaware that since we passed through last time the wounded have grown stiff in their arms, that their brothers don't write, that France is tottering, that a cavalryman in a sudden fit of madness has gone after them with a revolver — none of this do we realize; we throw them kisses, and make game of the red-haired ones, and the fat ones, and the little girls

who squint. They take what is ignorance on our part for courage; they gaze at us admiringly, and it is always the girl who is crying who lets herself be kissed. . . .

After passing between silent mountains, encircled by aqueducts, and then between a vast series of embankments spotted with vine-stocks, we come upon Dijon, each one of her many hills crowned with an urban diadem. The sun floods our convoy with the same rays that are baking the grapes. We draw into the station, but are caught in the train-shed between an ambulance and a cavalry train, both of them crammed to overflowing, and cannot communicate with the active inhabitants of Dijon except through a wounded man, or an indolent spahi. One of the wounded comes from our regiment in active service and we at last get news of our juniors: they have been in Lorraine, and have had to deploy in the polygon of Saarburg itself; the German cannon had every point located, but the exercise trenches were luckily excellent. He refers to the dead by their nicknames; l'Aigu is killed, Mimi is killed, and we turn to our officer to translate this news, bringing the poor bodies back into their parade names: Delaberque is killed, Martineau is killed—

for some of them we sharpen the proper names into a first name: Jean is killed, Albert is killed. The men all begin to talk of what each one was doing the last time they saw him: he was devouring a large slice of ham, he was with Juliette, he was asleep. The fellow who saw him eating understands even less than the other two.

When we leave, night has come on. The peasant who in the old days used to shut up the farmyard gate goes to bed last, and pushes to our heavy doors. We are on the main line where there are no jolts, the line on which even invalids and millionaires on their way back from Nice can drowse in peace. At Laroche and Fontainebleau the *Dames de France*, already—and eternally—accustomed to the wounded, wake us and look after us as if we were mutilated; it alarms them to see us jump out of the cars, and they hold our glasses while we drink, and take our hands and assure us that we have no fever. Then, at four in the morning, from a viaduct, I recognize at the terminal of the tramway which starts from the Louvre, the village where the Museum caretakers live. Over every door hangs a plaster cast of the Venus of Milo, or the Neapolitan fisher-boy. There is Diane de Poitiers—Paris at last!

But it is only Rosny, Nogent, Noisy. We circle about them and Paris defends herself against me with all her forts. We are not to enter the city; we are to submit to the will of those rival general staffs which are amusing themselves with making the best tangent on Paris with our trains, and I only venture to think of half-forgotten faces from Carrières or Pantin — the friends of my friends. Some old territorials tell us — but they don't blame us for it — that our train has run over one of them at Saint-Maur, and thus give us as early as daybreak the impression that every provincial has the night of his arrival in Paris — an impression of death and destruction. My companions wake up. They look out to the right and admire the Church of the Sacred Heart on its mountain, and ten minutes later, on the left, admire a gigantic marble monument with five cupolas; still, though I dare n't admit it, the Sacred Heart.

All the inhabitants have transported the fronts of their houses to the edge of the railroad, their flags, too, and their curtains, and any other trophies which in time of peace had been born of a former war. It is a northern exposure, but never mind — the housewives will face north with their sewing after this. The photographers have hung

out streamers with portraits of William with two green electric lights for eyes, and turn on the current, although the arrangement is intended for troops going by at night. In one dooryard a little old man in a fencing-coat is making a bayonet-charge on a dummy topped by a helmet. The wife of a tailor, perched on a sky-blue roof, points out her humble spouse, shouting that he is off to-morrow. A baker retards his bedtime on our account, and as a reward sees his children get up in their morning freshness for the first time in his life. In the usual places where the race-trains used to stop, for no apparent reason, we stop, too, and the passengers of the trains inbound for Paris toss us their unread newspapers, which are carried on the wind from one car to the next, gathered in, and thrown out again.

At the grade-crossings the children inform us sadly that there is nothing but bottled wine left at the inn, and leap with joy to see us rich. The children at the junctions are spoiled; they demand swords and helmets, and accept with a bad grace — it is true that the *pour-boire* is too humble for so great a war — our German nickel sous. A black-bearded motorist, whom we suspected of being a spy, orders a hundred bottles of wine for

us from the nearest inn; we had taken generosity for hypocrisy because they wear the same mask. Finally, the bold suburbs turn their very faces to us; we see the fronts of the town-halls, the churches stand perpendicular to the railroad, we cross the public squares, and hear from loquacious suburbans all the stories that were passed about on the day of mobilization; the child with the wooden gun, the Senegalese with heads in their knapsacks, the wounded Prussian slapping his captured general in the face. No more trains for Paris; all the traffic now goes round the city.

At Beaumont, information about our journey: the regiment is ordered to stop some dozens of armored German motor-cars which have pierced our lines. At Creil, English hospital train. The wounded drink all the Kirsch we have left from Alsace.

"Brandy!" they cogently remark, wiping their mouths with their bare arms.

"No!" we answer: "Kirsch — *quetsch!*"

"Yes," they repeat, "brandy."

Toward three o'clock, sudden stop. The bugles blow. The train can go no farther, and as there is no turn-table turn, must back off, head on to the enemy. The sun is oppressive, the exhausted

earth destroys our vision of a safe, round globe, and all the shadow on the plain is heaped in square patches, on its farther edge, one to each little wood of black pines. The cannon are booming with those sullen reports that exhaust the air, and in the heart set some ghostly needle to spinning. We listlessly fall into line, each company so remote from the next that for quite an hour armored motor-cars could safely have dashed through the spaces between.

II

WAR CURRENTS ON THE HIGH ROAD

Ansauvillers, August 30.

We are received with open arms. The inhabitants had heard that the towns near by were occupied last night, and thought they had been abandoned. They have organized the essentials for a siege: a home guard and a fire brigade. The same old veterans command the two companies, and all may yet go well if fire and panic do not break out together. The officials insist on our taking up our quarters in the town — let the outposts look out for themselves. It is not general protection Ansauvillers wants, but an individual guard, a squad, a soldier, a gun for every house and family. They treat us as guests, preparing hot water and soap for us, and carrying our packs about by the top straps, like valises. The hairdresser shaves all those who are quartered in his group of houses for nothing, and charges the others — extra protectors — two sous. In front of every house is set out a table with pens and ink; for the

first time since the war began we have leisure to answer friends to whom we have owed letters left over from days of peace. To our relatives we send telegrams, as the service is still uninterrupted, and those of us who come from Paris confide some missives to a motorist who will deliver them this very evening.

Little by little, once my letters and telegrams have got off, the idea of the telephone comes to me, as naturally as it came to Edison himself, and my host is ready to risk the adventure, for he has a telephone and is the mayor besides. We reach Paris by the broken line of his important connections, getting Pontoise from his prefect, and Paris Central from his Pontoise senator. At last the Government office where my friends are. Here is Solis — this is luck, for he is the man in the office who is easiest to understand over the telephone; an official with literary tastes telephones him for pleasure every morning, to talk of Paul Hervieu. He might keep the people round him quiet — what a racket! — my cannon has hushed its noise.

Suddenly he understands, calls out to his colleagues to be still, and I seem to see him turning toward the garden and the open window with

his receiver, to get the full flavor of telephoning to the front.

"Ah, my dear fellow, where are you?"

"Not far from Guise."

But the name is too bold and sibilant. The senator and the prefect, who were holding the wire, vanish. We are cut off. Nothing more.

Night has come on. The maid insists on blacking our boots, and lends us some of the mayor's old slippers. We stretch out on the elaborate grass-plot in front of the villa where, to reach their chosen official, all the electors must make the circuit of an enormous heart cut in the turf.

Sunday, August 31.

On a bicycle so new and sparkling that they are searching heaven for a halo of the same make, a fair-haired girl, emerging like an apparition from the green fields, rolls by us, only to dismount abruptly and faint away. I support her; her eyes are wide open, her heart is beating. Unconscious of the chaff of my comrades, who suggest that I must be on the point of marriage, she relaxes and clings to me. But I suddenly feel her weight, and she blushingly frees herself, explaining that she has only known how to dismount since yesterday.

She begs us to help her get on again; we give her a push, and she is off, but we can tell by the wobbling of the machine that she would like to turn her head to give us an uncertain good-bye smile.

Two more cyclists. The man has set a child on his handle-bars, the woman pedals along under a load of bundles; the child is crying because he wants to face his father, instead of looking at the road. The man asks us the way to Noailles; the woman, who cannot dissimulate, the way to Rouen. I am just going to find out, when they hurry after a passing group of cyclists; the crying child acts as a horn — his plaintive voice flows on like a German ballad. The constable has come to join us, in a temper.

"Those are refugees!" he tells us.

Toward eleven o'clock, while the real inhabitants, beloved of God, are at mass, the town is all of a sudden sprinkled with motor-cycles, dog-carts, and trucks which take breath for a moment and start on again as soon as another motor-cycle, or light cart, or heavy wagon passes; for they want no friends but those who go at their own speed. It takes a very united family for the cyclists to accommodate their pace to the horses'. The constable stops them when they take the wrong turn.

"Straight ahead," he commands.

We, too, blame them for spreading fear on such a peaceful Sunday, in a town where the firemen, in uniform, have just given a rehearsal on their scaffolding of a fire thirty feet high. Soon the whole place is crowded, for the sentries at the northern post are letting everybody in, whereas at the southern one they demand passports. Some of the refugees stop, too, for joy in at last finding, in the midst of the terrified districts, this town steeped in sun and peace, and ask if there is an hotel. They come from the north; those from the big cities, like Turcoing and Lille, are heading for other big towns, for Beauvais or Rouen; those from the villages are going toward minute villages that we have never heard of; every one seeks refuge in the name of a town about the same size as his own.

"And your houses," asks the constable, "and your things?"

They have locked the doors.

"And the Prussians? You've seen them?"

Not they. But a cyclist who is with them. He won't be long in coming by; he is always one village late, for he's a great talker and people treat him to drinks.

Not many peasants so far; all these people lived in houses on the road, and had only to cross their thresholds to be exiles. As yet no animals, no flocks to give the procession the fatal but sure pace of a migration. No local costumes; it's as if they were emigrating by professions. One has only to say, at the sight of a coat with an academic button, or a blouse spattered with paint: —

"There goes the schoolmaster, there goes the wheelwright, or maybe the painter."

Immense wagons loaded with children, whose couch of hay the appetites of the team diminish at every stop. In covered hay-carts, great-grandmothers with their great-granddaughters — the boys have slipped out through the slats; a family dragging its mattresses on wheelbarrows, as ants drag their eggs; an ox-cart that holds a family from Douai, and a visiting family from Paris — distant cousins who remain ceremonious, guests even in misfortune, and bring all their luggage with them, while their hosts, for lack of room, have left everything behind.

Now the refugees are passing quickly through our jeering town — all but the poor, confused families who know nobody in France, stop at the least look, answer that they are going straight

ahead, and tremble if you tell them that that is n't the right way. Some of the mothers ask for milk, drink it, and kiss their babies with lips wet with cream. Four women ask our help; for their horse, wheezing and trembling, has fallen down and refuses to budge; it takes eight men, just twice their number, to pry up his hoofs and set him on his feet again. . . . So the feeble procession goes on: those who are no good for war are in command; hunchbacks, or great lazy louts, the sort who would have the goitre, if this were a mountain region.

They all carry, either in cages or on leash, the animals which make the best fugitives: dogs, canaries, cats. In every carriage, too, is the object that would have been saved in case of fire, or else — to-day a bond of union — the one that would have been quarreled over in a division of property; a card-table, suspended like a goat with its feet tied together, or a phonograph. Now comes a hair-dresser with his waxen heads. Now some poor old people with their fixed attachments — an old woman in her armchair, an old man on his camp-stool. Some fresh, plump women in waterproofs, who have taken time to slip on their best chemises, but not to tie up the pink ribbons, which flutter

in the breeze. Sometimes, a more processional series of vehicles drawn by donkeys, mules, and horses in due order, as if to herald Reason and the Queen of the day. A real moving-van, heaped with mattresses, and followed tenaciously by some families on foot, who are hoping that the mover will lend them a tick of straw when night comes. Haggard faces of those who have lost a precious piece of furniture, or a relative, or a pocket-book, and who, ever since they started, have walked forward under the temptation to turn back again. Bardan begins to feel upset, especially as he discovers a resemblance to his family on every face. Here is his sister's double; here is his aunt — she has a dress just like that. Only a tall, dark girl seems new to him from every point of view, and he stops talking, suddenly aware of the incompleteness of his family.

But now appear some fugitives whom the constable recognizes, families from quite close by, who evidently feel it more respectable to be leaving on a Sunday than on a week-day. The wind has risen, and the villages round Ansauvillers on which neither cannon nor regiments have been placed are beginning to flutter, and blow away. First the Pintau family from Breteuil, then the

Durandons from Barlier; the constable looks scared when he recognizes them, and realizes, too, that those who are leaving are not, as he supposed, the most hypocritical or the most avaricious. The Pintaus were goodness itself; they pay their stable bill in advance. All the same, those who used to wear the war-medals of 1870 have taken them off.

At noon our bugles sound the general alarm. The inhabitants don't feel worried; they tell themselves that if they had artillery quartered upon them a cannon might be fired at midday. But the companies get ready and fall into line; they see the convoy forming . . . we start off. The people of the town who first understand want to link their fate with the regiment's, and scramble up on to the company vehicles with bundles of clothes, and food, which they hand out to the drivers in the hope of winning them over. But the colonel has every seat cleared, and the drivers woefully give back the biscuits — one by one, as the packages have broken in their pockets. To clear the road the refugees have taken our places in the stables and courtyards, and learn from us the proper way to leave. The order was so sudden that I did not say good-bye to the constable.

We are going north. Ten miles of discussion with Lieutenant Bertet, who does not care for this departure toward Lille; we are not making the same sort of war, he and I; he wants to see only the regions he knows and I only those I don't know. . . . Suddenly, great excitement. A group of chasseurs on bicycles are waving their caps from some high ground at the corner of a park. They jump on their wheels and rush down upon us, bearing hard on their pedals.

"Bravo," they yell, "bravo!"

What have we done now? They decipher and applaud the number of the regiment. What would they say if they knew it was the old regiment of Dupré, the champion cyclist of France!

"Are there many of you?"

We are a division, and when they hear that we have some Maroccans with us their joy increases, like the joy of children who have gone to meet their uncle the explorer, and see him getting out of the train with a negro. For two weeks our cyclists have not known what an infantryman looks like. Every night they are promised some, but it is always cavalry who arrive in the morning; riders still more tired than themselves, who come from farther north, and try hard to take

them, the cyclists, for the longed-for infantry.

The road now begins to fill up with cuirassiers and scattered dragoons who shake hands with us; once we have reached the wall of the park, as far as the eye can reach along the valley lies their immense snake-like length, wriggling with curiosity and satisfaction — with certain fixed points, however, which are the neighborhood of the colonels; three whole divisions winding between us and this invisible enemy.

We have lengthened our step, and are marching as close to them as we can. They expected us a little earlier, at three o'clock, and it's six, but they have taken advantage of this respite to make their toilets. Even the laziest of them have washed themselves, and trimmed their beards. They are in fine form, and in exchange for our chocolate and gingerbread they offer us the less prosaic things they were using — razors, soap-balls, cosmetics. A brigadier douses me with eau-de-cologne, others follow his example, and we make our second entry into the war under atomizers. But we have orders to separate, and cross the ditch to the field on the other side. Along the furrows, the heavy tread of the companies has become a flowing and active march; the

cavalry admire us, and, so far as marching goes, we are beginning in fact to know how to do it.

Evening has come on. Under cover of the dark the regiment has got so thoroughly mixed up with the Cambrai Cuirassiers that they give up trying to separate them. In Tartigny, I sleep under a covered wagon in the court of the château, near Drouin, a cavalryman of the first class, who offers me the hay he has prepared for the night. I can stretch out on it in comfort; he is a six-footer.

Cold night. Drouin makes light of the cold — he makes fun of everything. He is a workman at Lille, and does not believe in fate.

III

VIGIL NEAR PARIS

Thursday, September 3.

At six o'clock we leave Fosseuse. Once we have passed the park wall, we are in the suburbs. At every bend in the road rival automobile tires point out the distance to Paris, the French tires calculating it from Notre-Dame, the American tires from the Opera. Fields, but all below embankments; the fine surface loam has been sold for the Luxembourg or the Tuileries. Here is the point where the country road strikes a vein of cement and macadam, the front line of brokers' excursions, the farthest reach for taxis, the goal of the efforts and the renown of bicycle racers and café concert actors. Here, too, are the enormous piers to which they attach the tents that are pitched above Paris on big circus days. The last gas-jets fed by Paris are still burning, and one sees, projecting into the daylight, all that the city keeps underground: lead conduits, tramway terminals and bumpers.

On squares framed in elms, miniature statues

of Cupids or dolphins occupy spots that will some day be filled by the famous sons whom the newly rich will engender. Here the town-hall, where Mounet recites in monologue on Sundays the part he is to play at the Français the following week; there the fifty-kilometer limit beyond which those who are banished from Paris must live — if they listen attentively they need not lose a single one of his verses. Haystacks haunted by tramps in bowler hats. In the streets, dogs that have scarcely evolved from the luxury of Paris, and whose hinder parts are Russian or Pomeranian. Along the highroad, factories of Belgian brilliantine, adhesive gilt, liquid iron — everything that gives a sheen or polish. Bergeot guesses from the look of them what Paris must be like. Here is Chambly, where the Uhlans, who do not care for adventures with escaped lions, will be put to flight by the belling of the stags in the park. Lucky infantrymen; they will never know that to go back to Paris by train means going back to confusion, to personal egotism; here the inhabitants are more and more generous, as if it were for their good-will that they had been banished to a distance of twenty or thirty kilometers.

Cider turns to wine, and wine to vermouth as

we get nearer, and the bar-tenders, who have modestly stopped their phonographs, are trying to talk themselves. The road has become a river; we are following the Oise. At the base of every factory chimney stand the oldest of the workmen who once built it — gathered there now to tear it down, yet holding their pondering heads higher than the most learned philosophers. By every bridge and viaduct is an officer of the Engineer Corps, armed with a white-plastered lath, as the overseer of houses that are being repaired stands guard on a Paris sidewalk. In Champagne the population decides to accompany us, and accepts our help. We carry pasteboard hat-boxes which are heavier than if they were loaded with cartridges; we push baby-carriages full of bronzes and strong-boxes. The lightest objects have turned fearfully heavy, as they do in dreams, and when an overcoat is dropped you hear a metallic or a silvery ring. At the villas, the care-takers are hastily plucking electric-light bulbs or early peaches, according as their masters took pride in their parlors or their gardens. Gentlemen of means, who had been occupied the night before in installing their billiard-rooms on the Oise, are moving out, along with their new cues, their

exotic furniture, their Arabian stools, their Cashmere shawls, and their parokeets; as if every house found with a non-French article in it were going to be burned down. A little boy, who is walking near us all by himself, encourages us to think him an orphan; when suddenly discovered by his aunts, his mother, his sisters, and his grandmothers, he does not know where to look, and hurries away very red in the face. A long pause in Parmain; the refugees wait half an hour because they prefer to stay with us, but they get tired of it, and apologetically start on alone.

They are right; as soon as we reach the forest of l'Isle-Adam, our march becomes uncertain. Orders turn us first north, then south; we feel as if a great general staff, somewhere in our rear, were constantly digging up our magnetic pole and burying it again the next minute. At Baillet, the commandant gives us the news that the Germans have passed the Oise at Senlis and are upon us. We deploy, as we suppose, not knowing that the Oise does n't go through Senlis and that all one can cross there is the Nonette.

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We are hidden in the bed of a little brook, with no water and many nettles in it. Not a movement but costs us a prick and a red blotch. Brambles, too, and thistles, all the cross-grained plants that the big newspapers have since declared edible. Night has come on, and we are shivering. We close up toward Écouen, putting out our fires, but carrying burning sticks in our hands on the chance of their being needed again directly. This is the first trench where the subalterns snub the soldiers who dig seats or — prophetically — loopholes for themselves, and where the regiment, after deploying, presents a line a few inches thick to the Germans. We remain standing, our left resting on the Moiselles Church, and the soldiers who go by us shake hands — as one does at a funeral — with those whom they recognize in this interminable family. The men discuss the distance to Paris: the most chilly cut it down to fifteen or twenty kilometers, while those who have never seen it calculate in miles.

We are silent. From time to time a raucous cough indicates the most unhealthy hollow in the ditch, or the soldier who would be the first to die in time of peace. The true sound of the brook is

given, a hundred yards behind it, by the soughing of some immense poplar-trees; while the sound of the regiment is imitated by fleeing civilians whose vehicles are rolling by on the road. When we yawn we feel as if we had uttered a yell that could be heard the other side of Écouen a few seconds afterward. Some of our drowsy comrades all at once take on an energetic, wide-awake air; the fact is they have suddenly decided to open their last can of food, at the next stop; or death has suddenly ceased to frighten them; or they have renounced ever drinking any more bordeaux, or catching any more trout.

Sometimes we go off on patrol, following up the edge of the brook. Shadows that have escaped from the nettles jump into the ditch at the sound of our footsteps; weary horses, whose heads droop lower and lower, are suddenly startled awake by the touch of the earth on their nostrils. Motionless groups — officers; the more stripes they have, the more remote are they from the brook, and the less completely lost in the mist. The colonel over there stands out quite plain, the regiment's only mind.

Next we begin to climb, advancing across those concentric highways which do not allow timid pro-

vincials to reach Paris until they have ten times circled around it. Sometimes we look for Germans, as one hunts for spirits, in the sky, overhead, on the horizon; sometimes we look for them like a stray bit of game in a tuft of holly, or under a harrow with an awning stretched over it. We lose ourselves, for the trenches to-night are too far away, and the zone with no master is five miles wide.

There are no disputes. We are no longer living one of those many days when the humor and the movements of the regiment were so disorderly that one could explain them better by any other theory than that of war. In the midst of these nettles which keep us so wide awake, we feel ourselves to be useful, and as we are coming up the river, up the Seine itself, the rumor spreads that we are protecting Paris. Sartaut protects it in the manner of a man who lives there, turning his back on it completely, but throwing his cigarette in front of the ditch, not behind — not inside the walls; Bardier, a commercial traveler who has once been through, protects it by sharply asking Sartaut to confirm him that one can go from the rue Beaubourg into the rue Saint-Denis. Maps are handed about, and we scratch matches to

study the plan of Paris, which is easy to understand and just fits into these kindly brains.

A gentle pressure which has no doubt emanated from the city keeps all these eyes half alight, half dreamy. It is midnight. We imagine Paris ever so peaceful, strewn with our sleeping comrades. Under every roof we lift we see our beloved, stretched out in her white slumber. We see in their beds even those whom we never had to think of as lying down, and whom we never met save at high noon at Laveur's Restaurant. We have no idea that the Louvre is already empty, and the Pantheon too; that a train full of statues is starting for Toulouse between two trains full of archives — to break any possible shock; nor that the astronomers of the Observatoire are taking to pieces and burying the lenses that served on our globe; nor that they are hoisting cannons up on to Montmartre to balance the *rive gauche*, with its overcrowded stations. We see in their beds even the rag-pickers, those rancid night-lamps; we feel that the trained nurses are dozing, and the idea of bakers, by good luck, does n't come to us.

It is three o'clock and bitterly cold. The colonel's horse sadly watches the orderly burning his hay.

Luzarches, Friday the 4th.

Dinner in an arbor with Juliette, the housekeeper, who at the age of thirty already had her fourteen daughters, but none of whose sons-in-law has succeeded in producing a child. She has no hope save in war to change this situation. A few hours ago she held in her arms our friend, Saint-Genix, who had been killed by the Uhlans while on patrol, and refused to give up the body, in spite of their revolvers. She is arranging a dormitory in the attic where eight of us can sleep — that's just what she always wanted, eight sons! — and helps us play tricks on each other: apple-pie beds, heavy weights under the blankets. She grieves because she has no sawdust to add to the discomfort.

Saturday, the 5th.

Alarm at four o'clock. I go to the park to wake the horses. They were really lying down, and get up. For some reason I thought La Fontaine had lived in Luzarches, and this walk gives me all the memories that the English take home from Château-Thierry. The little animals I meet — hedgehogs, carp, skunks — move gently and

sedately for me — as they do in fables — toward some tender moral; some pheasants, a Japanese cock, some gold-fish make me conceive a more vain and picturesque La Fontaine. Glorious cold weather; it is the hour when the leaves to which midnight has been fatal are falling; a torpid sun is disentangling its rays one by one, as a trireme might its oars. Under the leadership of the rabbits and the ants all the small consolations of life come back to me in this dawn — modest but vastly consoling against Germany, where the least fable, from Grimm to Lessing, requisitions nothing less than an elephant or a dromedary to carry its moral.

We are going straight east. We traverse those ugly barren towns to the north of Paris which wear the same names as the flowery towns to the south; Marly, Fontenay. We graze Mareil-en-France, Châtenay-en-France, whose muddy soil sticks to everything that goes through. We are striking across country, and when we occasionally hit a bit of road the company has hard work to keep its balance. The general undoubtedly wants to air his brigade; not a formation that he does not command by twos, or single file, or battalions; not a soldier in mid-ranks but reaches the edge at

least once to take his share of air and country. The march does not yield much for our journals, because our memories, for a month past, have been no more than the ribbon of the highways, and are no wider than telegraph-tickers; I should remember nothing about this day if all the memories of the preceding days which had lost their places had not — because it is the last one — taken refuge there in spite of me: the woman swimming in the river; the child who boasted that he had stopped obeying since the war — he went to buy us milk, and eggs, and wine, and we proved, to his confusion, that he had obeyed three times, even if all the eggs were counted as one.

From midday on, as far as the eye can reach, lines of new troops, parallel to the regiment on this flat ground, are copying all our movements; obliquing if we oblique, and when we march single file tapering out to show us that they, too, are made up of separate men. From time to time the ambulances take advantage of one of our halts to defile beside us, with their processions of negroes, Moroccans, and white horses — only the god of physic himself is lacking. Sometimes, as it debouches from a wood, a troop we had supposed numerous ends abruptly, like Hannibal's army in

the "movies." When we rest, instead of distractions bounded by the highway, there are games in which the whole regiment takes part; a football game in which a zouave's chechia, stuffed with paper, is tossed from battalion to battalion; a race on the horses which have been forgotten in the Marly stud. Field-mice slip from under our feet, and lady-bugs and rats — all the little creatures that live where the general staff's map is blank.

On our right, the Moroccans. On our left a brand-new regiment which one realizes must just have been formed, so similar are its officers, its men, and its uniforms. Every one of our companies, on the contrary, now has personages and protagonists who stand out so sharply from the ranks that it seems as if battle and war must be engaged between them. After these long weeks of marching, we reach the fighting with positions fixed by the degree of our strength or our weariness; the most courageous seem nearer war than the others, and in spite of ourselves it is from among them that we choose our first dead. On these faces which were alike a month ago everything death can aim at has become visible; and every one of our seven captains has revealed

his virtues or his peculiarities to us, as the secret of which he must die: they might be photographed, for they will never change again. Here is Flamond, who is to die in his greatcoat, and already carries it folded on his arm. There Perrin, with the eyeglass that is to save him on Tuesday dangling on his chest; he pinches it below the forehead that will be bored through on Wednesday. Yonder Major Gérard, a philosophic old bachelor whom the colonel did not care for because he did not believe in the external world; he must have made with each sergeant the wager Pascal made with God, for he shares his sweet biscuit with me, and talks with me as if I never had to die. Over there Captain Perret, who knows everything. Not an officer's face but seems a target now, and it is in their heads that we see them all wounded.

Moussy-le-Vieux — a little town which the English occupied yesterday before obliquing on Meaux. The regiment has difficulty in making itself comfortable in the tracks they have left: the wash-boilers have this time been used to cook, not the soup but the washing; the stables have sheltered the carriages, while the horses camped outside; they had taken out all the beds and slept

in the open air. We had to do over the village, as one does over a room in the provinces after the departure of a colonial friend. We live in a hunting-box built of brick and slate, with the ambulance of the division. The cannonading to the east is so violent and so near that the windows are rattling. We expect the alarm any moment, and repair our knapsacks and guns with the help of the ambulance men, who give us cotton plugs for our triggers, and castor oil for our machine guns; for, egoists that men are, the best remedies remain those that they have found for themselves.

Night. . . . On the first floor the officers climb into the beds that were maltreated yesterday; they are annoyed by the rocking, displeased to have their heads low and their feet high, and to toss on lumpy mattresses on the eve of the Marne. But I, whom chance protects, stretch out on the ground-floor on the most perfect level; I go to sleep on a billiard-table.

IV

FIRST DEAD

Sunday, the 6th.

CAREFUL not to stumble over the rows of sleeping bodies, seeking a foothold between them like some too timorous conqueror of old, the night watch of the brigade advances to the billiard-table where I lie. I read the order: —

"For the colonel. Immediate departure direction Dammartin. Warn the ambulance."

We get even by waking all the orderlies and doctors first, and I go up to knock at the door of the colonel, who has lain down all dressed.

"What time?"

"Two minutes of twelve."

I hear him hurriedly getting up so as to be ready at exactly midnight. I make the tour of the floor, knocking at all the doors. Captain Lambert intends to ask me the time and asks the day.

"Sunday."

The waking words of all the captains, doctors, and commissaries of the brigade, the first words that they murmured on the day of the battle, I

pick up one by one. Dr. Mallet calls, "Good! very good!" Lieutenant Bertet, who had gone to bed naked, despairs of ever being ready, and as soon as he gets his shirt on goes back again. An unknown officer replies with his own name. Pattin, in his drowse, answers as foolishly as one does in some parlor-game, when one is unexpectedly hit on the nose with a handkerchief or a pair of gloves: "Get up, rascal!"

With these forfeits I go down again. But I take the wrong staircase, and the door I open lets me into the park. It is empty, luminous; guarded by poor yellowing sentinels, blue-shadowed coppices, the reserve of autumn and of the night; great cedars crouched level with the sleeping lawns; midnight brightness and silence heaped up against this *barrage*, whose wall separates them from the forces of war.

Once in a while an armed soldier strays in, as I did, and is startled into silence; says a word to me of the solitude and goes up again. For we have to go up again and pass out into the noisy courtyard from this subterranean domain.

The colonel is on the steps, hesitating as he does every morning between his two fine horses; he decides, by the aid of a lantern, on the first one

on whose head its shaft falls. At the cross-roads the regiment is already defiling. The corporals call the roll as they march, and redistribute the names that, like the rest of our equipment, had been removed for the night. There are some that come to our ears which one would like to keep for one's self: for the rest of the campaign, war-names — Bellenave, Trinquelard; for later on, peace-names — Jean Fraxène, Saint-Prix.

It is dark. The will of the generals is not yet as powerful as the laws of gravitation, and it is in the low places that we find the artillery, on the heights the hussars. We go fast, because they give way before us without a word, and get their horses into line. In the rear, too, we feel for the first time a spirit of kindness and good-will. When we pass the convoy the drivers of the supply wagons give us their bread, and the despatch-riders, whose game yesterday was to jostle and dismay us, go by without a word, rubbing an affectionate hand over each of us in turn, as a child caresses the bars of a gate; the farther back they come from, the more devoted we divine them to be — Paris, away behind us, must just now be the very center of military good-will. Motor-cyclists bring the mail, for the postmen of

our army have willed not to sleep, and to distribute before the morning. Lorand actually gets a letter mailed the evening before, which, with the connivance of some postmaster, has covered the road from Neuilly-sur-Seine to Dammartin at top speed. He reads it to us, for it is the only war letter that on its arrival has brought news, instead of stale reminiscences: yesterday the cannon were heard at Neuilly; yesterday at five in the afternoon Lorand's girl cousins came to spend the night, for they are taking the train at four in the morning. Now at last we feel our souls keeping time with the souls of civilians; we love them a little better for it, and especially adore the poor cousins who at this very moment are dressing in haste, brushing their beautiful teeth by candlelight, and pressing down their valises with their two petticoated knees.

Dammartin is packed with troops. From all the doors, feet first, overflow sleeping soldiers. Not a light, not a dispute; to the animals only do the men talk — to the horses they saddle, to the dogs they startle; among themselves they are without speech. A little house is burning without the zouaves' apparently noticing the flames, and our reservists themselves, who are all firemen or

fire sergeants in their towns, look on and feel the instinct of rescue dead within them. Poor fire, which ends, however, by lighting the dawn.

The dark edges of the road choose for the day, according to their humor, one of the two uniforms which the highway commission permits, and become young elms or acacias. Here is the sunrise. We suddenly shiver, come naked out of the night. After five hours of marching, morning finds us as strong and hearty as one is at noon, but dawn with its faint, thin air gives us no sustenance. Our brigade is again isolated; the Moroccans on our left, and the English on our right have vanished, and their two encircling groups are as remote and abstract an assistance to us as England and Morocco themselves. I am beside Dollero, who is dreaming of peace, who declares it is stupid to complicate one's life, and is going to marry his *petite amie* as soon as he gets back. How many *petites amies* we in France promised ourselves to marry toward the 6th of September! But, if he dies, I must have something to remember him by, and it shall not be his Louis XVI sconce, which has no mate, but his Boilly drawing, the inquisitive young girl of whom the critics say that Boilly was never more studied by a model.

Lucky sergeant, whose friends, on the morning of a battle, feel that they owe him the portrait of a little girl!

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After Dollero, my two other neighbors, Drigeard and Dremois. It is a comfort to have three comrades whose initial is the same, as if it were an entire page torn out of the soldiers' dictionary. Drigeard hands me the report, which the colonel sends the sergeant-majors. When we halt, it is I who dictate it, with an order of the day that must be summarized — for there are two minutes left — in telegraphic style: "At hour when begins battle on which depends fate France, fitting remember ages past, look back. Unities will let selves be killed, rather than yield ground." We are not especially moved, being accustomed to pick up, as by wireless, the most diverse orders. All the same, there was fighting here yesterday. Behind the bushes, forgotten knapsacks; on a battle-meadow, green as can be, some dead horses around the carcass of a bull — a Spanish army would shudder. We also see all the ranks of the regiment in front of us turning toward a lonely elm that stands beside the road, and the news

travels down the line that the Prussians came as far as that. Why only so far? Why did n't they wish to know the southern side of the elm, with its golden bark clear of lichen, where a notch had just been cut with an axe above the highest flood-mark? We look back to see the tree again, and know what the Uhlan viewed of France before he turned his rein: a château hidden by ash-trees, a town set in poplars — nothing fortunately, thanks to the trees, that has taken his stare unveiled. Here is a second elm, a larger one, which those who did not understand the first are studying curiously. All the torn papers that are blowing about, all the letters we pick up after this are covered with German script, for the Germans have gathered in all the French papers. Here is the last house where they halted. The peasant is at the door, and explains to us that he had them just a quarter of an hour. The invasion lasted long enough for him to light the fire, and go down to the cellar; when he came up again, they were running away. The two great emotions in the lives of the inhabitants of the captured towns of Lille, Laon, and Vouziers come to him almost simultaneously. He is the lucky man who married in the evening the woman he met in the

morning; the man whose money brings in the interest of a lifetime on the day of investment. An egoist for whom the war has ended; having no more need of the army, he refuses us his potatoes and his eggs.

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Now the sky is blue and we are hot. The sun has made a point of drying the dew that has fallen on the soldiers first of all. Friendly groups begin to form again, and the battalion thins out in the spots where affection and good-will do not flourish. A water service has been established, and with our hands full of a golden powder — for cocoa has been distributed — we wait, helpless, for the men to come back. For forty-five years the Germans have only waited for this unguarded minute.

Three shells — so unexpected that nobody dreams of being afraid of them. The first falls thunderously in the very middle of the road and rips the regiment into double columns of two, each one of which buries itself in its own ditch; the second, less noisy, breaks into fiery balls; the last diffuses an intolerable smell of powder. All three different and pretentious in their effects, as

if we were going to devote a special remark in our journals to each German shell. Here are three more — and you feel the sort of fear you have when you go shooting and the partridges flutter into your face instead of flying away. As I turn I see the clear-cut outlines of two thousand heads beaten down — all but one, which looks at me from afar, so that I may never forget, even for a second, what a man's face is: it is a mask with two eyes and their human look, two lips, one ear. Three more shells: the face has come closer; it has a beard, the forehead is low and mean. With each volley it changes thus, and wanders, fine or base, over these thousands of decapitated bodies.

All the officers have dismounted, since they have at last got to the long-expected war; and Michal, radiant, for it is he who has led us there, rejoins his telegraph operators once for all. We laugh and tell stories. Those who only asked not to be killed by the first shell pretend to be entirely at ease. The most timid imagine their heads in their hands, stick them on again with the cap on top, and give a kick at our dogs, which are running bewildered in the middle of the empty road, wondering, as each shock comes, what monstrous tin can they are being chased by. In our ditches

we sit down and make ourselves comfortable; those who were eating a hard-boiled egg finish it up, and we can lick the palms of our hands all the morning, too, because of the cocoa. It is for one moment trench warfare — two verdant trenches perpendicular to the enemy; a naïve war, where one does n't yet find any of those people who are annoyed by shells that don't explode; or any of the fussers who prefer percussion shells; or any of the people whose neighbors are always killed; an endurable war, for suddenly it is all over. The most valiant or the most rheumatic of us get up first, shake ourselves, and we are soon all standing about talking — encumbered, for the moment, by our arms, as if we no longer needed them; or as we shall be, dear comrade, the day of our return.

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We do not agree with those who declare they see nothing at the war. We see everything. From the hilltop where we await orders we see a large oval country, and the battle for Paris takes place in an empty field, which has this form and shape. As far as the eye can reach, the rolling surface of a land already despoiled of its wheat, strewn with

sheaves, each one of which seems even now to be marking the place of a wounded man; we are as glad to see them as cautious sailors would be to see spars and buoys distributed before a sea-battle. On our left a platoon of dragoons on patrol, filling completely the space that separates the army from the Channel, a platoon which we alternately take — we confess to an equal concern in either case — for Uhlans and for our general staff. On the right some regiments, still badly deployed, stiff and formal as if they had on Sunday uniforms; their principal anxiety seems to be to prevent a loose horse from going over to the enemy. The roads, suddenly too echoing and too fragile, are deserted. We cross them at a run, on the tips of our toes. Great white clouds hang low on the horizon, and the battlefield seems wadded.

Seven o'clock. From each company men are now beginning to scatter, lavishing cheering words and good-byes as they go. We had not yet been obliged, in our regiment, to distinguish between those who do and those who do not go into battle. The postal sergeant goes off. Bardan goes off. The little wood at our backs, a fantastic sort of sieve, allows the thin secretaries and their fat

sergeant to slip through. We are a little annoyed with them for concealing from us for five weeks that they would desert us at the first shell. For each man who goes off, the chances of death, by the mere law of averages, close in nearer about the rest of us, and our mission as fighters reveals itself for the same reason. Here we are, alone. At the entrance to the arena, warriors that we are, we are for one moment as sharply conscious of our profession as the gladiators used to be; we are conscious of being clumsy or supple, courageous or full of fear. Lazy, all of us already, like boxers, or runners, or any sort of professional athletes, for that matter; used up as soon as our energy is not needed, drawing no force from the earth save when we lie down on it. It is a surprise, too, to find here those whom we were of course taking to Germany, but not to fight; little Dollero, pale, absent, carrying his gun clumsily and suddenly losing his form — there are three or four who seem, as he does, to be dressed in old clothes and armed with guns that are too long, and bayonets that are too short; whereas the comrades that surround them suddenly appear dressed and armed to their own measure. We are all serious, for what had no reason or consequence yesterday

is to-day a question of death; the foremost of the squad think they will be the first to get the bullets, while the soldiers in the middle feel constrained to make war between barriers of living soldiers — an inconvenient war. Each man maneuvers his poor separate unity with the ready-made formulas of great generals in his head — by protecting his left, by taking his range in advance; one's body is as unmanageable as an army. The most friendly sections keep their distances rigorously. Only Jeudit, the *liaison* soldier, continues to rattle on, delighted with three letters that he has received this morning, and repeating that there is no invention like the post. Nobody has the heart to take up the defense of the printing press, or steam, or Sapolio, against him. Several sergeant-majors shout to him to fall into line.

"I follow the colonel," he replies.

He is the most modest attachment of the colonel, the part that copies orders on two white pages joined with a pin. If he is caught, swallowing them will have its dangers. He is the part that tells the colonel the time — not always without making him lose patience, for Jeudit's watch is in his cartridge-belt, and it costs him a cartridge at the least to hunt up the exact minute. His is

the best place; instinctively we get near the man of the company who is supposed to be lucky, who looks it, who is not near-sighted, or too fat, and has — as much as any man one knows only by sight can have it — an air of immortality. Unaware that the immortal member of the regiment is Verdier — the only one, after three years of war, who has not been either wounded or invalided — we for one more day confuse the regiment's fate with the colonel's fate. Everybody gets near him as soon as he can, as if he were a shelter, and often during the day an unknown soldier joins our group, silent, ready to oblige; it is a soldier who, for a moment only, does not care to die.

But here comes a cyclist from the brigade, bringing some thin sheets of paper that blow away; we run after him, and the general staff of the regiment follows its orders for a minute as the great poets do their thoughts — by climbing over hedges, shaking branches, and running into captains. We are to leave Major Gérard's three companies with the artillery, and advance with the five others through Saint-Pathus to a height. Further orders will meet us up there; all day Sunday, indeed, they will come to us at each

culminating point, the more to resemble inspiration. Dry orders that now refuse all play or relation with the names on the map, and no longer recommend us, as they did during the marches or exercises, to pass by the "Y" of Vincy, or find quarters between the two halves of a hyphenated name — Croix-Blanche, Grand-Puis; and besides we have reached a rectangle on the map where the names have been borne to the right by the same blast of wind, and leave a great empty space. We see it, after climbing the hill — it is the same yellow rolling field, crossed in the opposite direction by roads which have preserved the plan of some battle of the Empire; we avoid them with care, so as to stay in our own war.

In Saint-Pathus remains one solitary inhabitant, the mayor, who shows us the way to La Thérouanne, explaining how illogical the limits of his town are: there, twenty yards from the church, it is Oissery, and the shadow of the church-tower dwells in the rival town — it is less serious than if it were the shadow of the town-hall. At Oissery an old man, who wants us to tell him the weight of a German bullet, and the way the German cannons work; if he is a spy, he is a French spy. We go slowly, shells exploding at long intervals; the

battle, as sometimes happens in the "movies," stays a full hour at slow speed. Sometimes it takes on its true speed again, sometimes it exceeds it, at Brégi, for instance, where we strike a camp of enemy hussars, whom we vainly try to pursue. They were engaged in distributing their mail, and the letters of the German colonel are brought to our colonel. We pick up a hundred saddles: the thought that a whole Prussian squadron is this moment getting black and blue is not disagreeable to us.

The shells are now bursting just over us, every ten seconds, very high up, scarcely dangerous at all, and a burning soot falls on our shoulders as soon as we get up to advance. We are chimney-sweeps cleaning a sparkling heaven. The different sections make their rushes as usual; sometimes they pass us, sometimes we pass them. As the whistle blows, we see all their bodies rise almost horizontal, pulled up by their pale faces, and fall, twenty yards farther on, when their heads become too heavy again. They pass with a martial sound, but once they lie flat before us we can see nothing of them, on top of their packs, but a coffee-mill, or a lantern, or a saucepan — whatever they carry in the way of peaceful and do-

mestic objects. From time to time a smell of peppermint; one recognizes in the same way those who have broken their alcohol bottles during a charge. From time to time we see friends; here is Sartaut, here is Jalicot, and here — as if they were advancing in rhymes — are Lorand and Parent. Sometimes a straggler who has lost his bayonet, his wallet too, whom the colonel encourages: —

"What's your name?"

"Malassis."

"Come now, advance. Who is your sergeant?"

"My sergeant is Goupil, my lieutenant is Bertet."

When their names are asked, they all give extraordinary names that they have dug out of the Middle Ages. Only above the rank of lieutenant is one sure of getting a somewhat modern name. Here come the bullets. We heard one of them in Alsace, so they surprise us less. We deploy, and the men tumble after each other toward the scattered sheaves — they almost always run toward the same one, as if from far away it alone looked safe; then disperse regretfully toward the neighboring ones. No wounded as yet. Sometimes it seems to us as if a certain man had fallen down

very hard, or as if another groaned; we await with anguish the signal for departure, but, as the whistle blows, the suspicious bodies rise up like the rest. Nothing is more encouraging than a resurrection. The colonel laughs. The men laugh. Sometimes, when a shell fails to explode, it seems possible that nobody at all will be killed. Sometimes, by force of hope, we feel that the hour of the first man killed is deferred by this energy of ours. Then suddenly we notice a little crowd collecting somewhere, and hope drops.

I am the one whom the colonel sends toward this eddy every time; he pins his faith to my lucky ability to dissolve these enormous violet patches without losing him his first man, and till noon I succeed. It's only an enormous ant-hill. It's a dying horse. It is a corpse, the first the regiment sees, but it is one of the Gneisenau Hussars. It is another corpse, but — last and most selfish of my efforts — it is a dead man of the brigade, lying on top of a wounded one, on whom the shell has thrown him. Nobody dares separate them, as if to do so were a crime. One or two soldiers bare their heads. Others, after pitying the dead, comfort the wounded man, — who acts as a medium to bring them back to life, — and ask him

what the dead man's name is: he can't see it, he thinks it is poor old Blanchard. Has he got a beard?

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It is now the turn of this regiment, and chance has only to choose between our two battalions.

One last refuge. In the bottom of the valley, separating the field from the road, there is a ravine, flanked with trees whose tops scarcely show above the edge. The whole regiment plunges into this trench of young elm-trees. Order to halt. Comrades meet again laughing and breathless, and chatter so loud that the officers threaten, as they do at the maneuvers, to start again immediately. Long rest. Some wipe off their bayonets, and the *liaison* officers even sharpen their pencils. Cans of Spanish mackerel are doled out, and they pass around the sick-list on which the soldiers who have sore feet or toothache inscribe their names — jokingly, for this is only a claim-book against illnesses, and they are not to see the doctor. Little civilian maladies reappear for a moment, and take on important airs in this dead angle, safe from bullets. A corporal shows everybody a gash he has got in the wrist, and the colonel congratu-

lates him; if the regiment were fighting a duel this first blood drawn would leave nothing to do but go home again. Eyes are clearer, lips more finely moulded, words less coarse, for we all feel that we gain by presenting our souls and bodies to the shells with as little weight upon them as may be. Between eyebrows, lines are etched and mingled like initials. Faces whose whole force one covets, if one looks straight at them; but they turn away from you. Men with round chins, with very level eyes — the badly wounded of tonight, who so far can only be comforted for the most trifling ills: a cold in the eye, a blistered foot. On the most absent lips — as we shall see it on the lips of so many of the dead — a cigarette burns down till it scorches.

Two o'clock: order to start forward. We leave the ravine with sorrow, realizing obscurely what going out of one's trench will mean. All that the assaulting troops are to feel later, we feel; even a little more grievously, for in this first trench we had trees and shade, and on the edge of the ravine, instead of grass and soft earth, a stony road greets us so hardly! Above our mass, all our proper names, which have been suddenly roused, fly from one to the other. Then each name settles

down, and we climb the slope. The white clouds have lifted; the horizon is clear for a battle without boundaries; and in the fields behind us nobody but the colonel's mares, which escape from their tether, but gallop off together so that the colonel may have but one anxiety for the two of them.

We wait on the hill-top, for our artillery is not lengthening its aim. Just one last time I see my regiment, with all its peculiar characteristics: its Lieutenant Bertet, standing — his soldiers try in vain to make him lie down near them, but his thought is vertical to-day; its Captain Perret, always arguing, obliging his men, under shell-fire, to learn the names of the villages in sight and to repeat, before the command to fire, "The village to the right is Puisieux, the village opposite is Vincy, the village in the distance is Douy-la-Ramée; leave out the Ramée, that's too complicated"; with its Lieutenant Viard, who, being unable to keep quiet, pretends not to recognize the trees, and questions his irritable second lieutenant from the colonies: —

"Those are elms over there, or oaks?"

"Palms, sir."

"I mean those big trees behind those queer trees — poplars, I think?"

"Machineel trees."

He is on the point of losing his temper, but suddenly here are the 79's and the 131's — so declares Artaud, who has never been able to keep the true figures of the calibers in his head; and here — emotion makes him find the right number this time — are the 305's.

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It is Dollero who receives me in the ravine; a poor little poet in pain, quite empty of images and metaphors; it emaciates him. A horse is nibbling the acacias. Officers are reading their last letters, and hold them in their hands, like parts in a play. Sad stage-wings of war. Soldiers are looking at themselves in little mirrors — this time it's to find blood-spots on their faces; sometimes a man leaps in from outside, and sits down, his employment on the stage over. All this in the midst of a sweet, sickish perfume, for some fool is burning joss-sticks.

It has happened. Here is the first one. Two soldiers prop him up against the bank, and next him the second one, quite tiny. They change him about, shake him, collect in him for the last time whatever is human. They search his face for

a resemblance that is already beginning to escape them; and at the moment when they most catch it, bare their heads. For the smaller one, leaning over a little farther, and growing a little more moved, they repeat all that they do for the bigger; little by little they abbreviate their gestures as if their final aim were to bury still a third dead, a child. The whistle shrills, and when they break up the stack of arms they find themselves with two extra weapons, for they had made it with the two guns of the dead. Stealthily they put them down on a neighboring stack. Then they go off, and nobody is left with Dollero but the stray horse, which comes near, snuffs, goes off again, hopeless of understanding the death of an infantryman. . . .

A man killed. . . . My war is over.

The Dardanelles

To our right Marmora fell away; to our left the Gulf of Saros seemed to climb. On this peninsula, which thrusts itself like the bow of a boat between the rising and the falling sea, we lay, one close against the other, asleep. My neighbors were the twin brothers; if I woke I could comfort myself with the thought that all Frenchmen are alike. War then appeared an anodyne; it was enough that one of us should be saved, just one; and when I shut my eyes again there also came to me, came and calmed me, the thought of an only child, of one wife. France in her remoteness made herself simple, to give one for a moment the sleep of primitive man. Then suddenly the same guilty hand lighted all at the same time, each on its own continent, sunrise, daybreak, — and toward Armenia, the cold dawn. The stars dwindled. Two silver olive-trees — as we often see them on the "movie" screen — were stirring and shivering between the lines — the tatters of an immortal foliage. Then the sun rose.

It rose just below us, under our caps, under our

knapsacks, and I thought what each one of my men would have done had he received the sun itself as a gift. Baltesse would have kneaded it, rolled it in his hands; Riotard would have balanced it on his head, catching it when it bounced off. It was a carmine sun, which set everything on fire, and pricked our staring eyes till they suddenly seemed projections of its rays. A lark, attracted by the glitter of our arms and our kits, came soaring over the trench, following every traverse, every salient. Over in the Turkish lines they would only have had to draw its flight to know our shelter, and especially to mark those Frenchmen — the worst enemies of the Prophet — who use a mirror. On the coast of Asia one color was laid on after another, and my corporal from the Beaux-Arts shouted and protested when the same one reappeared. Every black rock, every gold-bordered cypress, was no more than a thick, blurred mass, choking up one of the springs of day. Little by little a light that was heavier than water fell into the depths of the Strait; you could see mosques balanced on their minarets, plane-trees turned upside down, hour-glasses to measure times and seasons: you understood the Orient. . . . But by this time the people who rise early had begun to

attack on the left, and some Sydney regiments, surprising the Kurds, were exterminating them without quarter, because the Turk is the national enemy of the Australian.

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Relief. At the junction of the Anglo-French line the *liaison* officers had stopped exchanging postage-stamps, and without this gummed paper there was danger of their losing contact again. We went down over the hills, jostling Bambaras and Peuls in the corridors; creatures with inglorious eyes, poor blurred and dulled images of ourselves — for our major-general, a clever strategist, kept his white soldiers on duty at night, his negroes by day. All the brilliance, all the emptiness, which the greatest poets in our country only suspect when they lie on their backs in the middle of a rolling field — these were ours here in our *boyau*. Miserable soldiers that we were, three months ago in France, to be ordered off on patrol duty and then to risk death just to see the tip of a church-tower between two clods of earth! Along the flanks of the peninsula below us the sea etched those parallel lines that we see only in good maps. We went on again, raising the sun

to the level of our arms by a single downward stride. For those who do not care to see a whole continent the first thing in the morning, there were islands. In the purple gulf, English ships; in the Straits, French ones, which prefer golden waters. We recognized the *Henri IV*, with its back-slanting plank; the *Châteaurenaud*, riding at anchor, but flecked with imitation foam at the bow to make the Turkish artillery think she was speeding at thirty knots. The torpedo destroyers, which had come in as far as Yenikeui, were slowly drifting out again, stern foremost, instead of turning. Far on the horizon Tenedos kept changing its place as we walked, attaching itself now to one island, now to another, then floating clear again to follow Imbros or Samothrace. Between its olive hill and its cypress hill the camp was astir, and every bird, too, showed a dark wing and a light. From four solitary columns rose ring-doves, flying by threes, and jays, which flew in couples; as if Love, half awake at this early hour, were still confusing his symbols. Some cicadas, those born that very morning on the plain, where the olive-trees had all been cut, lifted themselves ambitiously to the height of the pines, found nothing, dropped then to the level

of the olives, where they fell and died. We had now got within earshot of the African Chasseurs, who had been anchored in the roads for a fortnight, and were blowing their trumpets steadily to quiet the restless horses on the deck.

The whole army was there, between slopes which were now bare of their young rye, and their barley, younger still; contained on a mere ten acres which Englishmen, on their way to bathe, crossed all day long with their towels, just as they used to step across France to Nice. The gold-brown mass in the distance was the too-white horses of the spahis, enameled, by order, with permanganate; encamped at the mouth of the brook it was their right, as privileged beings, to drink all the water that came down to them. The zouave, with boxes on his head, was Colonel Nieger's orderly, bound for the château with Tanagra figurines that the sappers had dug up; whenever a shell came near him he stood perfectly still like a Spanish toreador who freezes into a statue when snuffed at by a bull. A New Zealander was painting his cannon in tiger-stripes to give it a more natural air. Some splendid aeroplanes were bringing the general staff chickens from Tenedos.

All that the European war had rejected was here; all the people whom the engineers of the next century will exile and imprison on an island: scholars, madmen, sportsmen. There was the most famous of Irish entomologists, whom the Indians — brothers of the ant — arrested from time to time as a spy; war in the English sector was hard upon insects, too. There were Creoles from the island of Réunion, whose poor circular gaze their sergeant sought in vain to lengthen on this long-drawn peninsula by always making them aim at Achi-Baba. There was the millionaire who had come with his nine hunters of Spanish wild goats. They were armed with giant spy-glasses, and used them lying flat on their backs, as Moroccans use their guns — one of them always declared he could see snow. Nothing but volunteers, these men of Auvergne and Burgundy, who had always wanted to see Byzantium; simple souls whom one recognized at a glance to have been born before the age of lies. The taller were more romantic, the smaller more practical, the darker more passionate. There were Duparc and Garrigue, — one square-built, with eyes that did not match, the other a giant with braided hair, — archaic warriors, who in

the siege operations of an earlier age would have offered themselves to handle the ram. There were the two policemen from Béziers, who all day long prevented us from cutting wood or bird's-nesting, under penalty of the law, and who, after dark,—always in the interest of the general staff,—pursued the forbidden sport of fishing with hand-grenades. There was Moréas, Toulouse Lautrec, Albala, who had never before been seen outside his Paris café. The Turks and the Greeks of the brigade, consulting together in a circular trench, were busy compiling the little dictionary that was to be so useful when we entered Constantinople, and could not agree either about the word "fox" or the word "immortal." . . . They sometimes got up all together and demanded the *Croix de Guerre*.

We were having lunch. We had half a quart of wine, a leg of cold-storage mutton, a sweet biscuit. Drunk and replete, we did not mind lending our fountain-pens to the comrades who were to attack to-morrow, and who were recopying — from inability to love better — the letters written before the last attack. Hoffman was playing his pocket-bugle in tears — he always wept as he played, otherwise it would have been

the flute, which his lachrymose habit had obliged him to give up in his school days. Juéry was writing poetry, his head at the bottom of the trench, his feet against the parapet, so that quantities of the same letters rolled about inside him, and at the Dardanelles nothing came to him but alliterations. For our water spaniel, Garrigue collected tortoises, orange adders, scorpions; but presented the monsters one at a time, lest he should come to believe in a single too-powerful beast. The sacristan of the Church of Sainte-Eugénie at Biarritz, who was to be the first to die, had already given himself a scratch with his gun, and for his sake they broke my first tube of iodine. I took advantage of it to hand out my laudanum. From that time on, all my good-bye presents were to be of service: there was nothing that could not answer some purpose; the little pharmacopeia, the English flask, the purple-and-red blanket . . . all my friends had been useful to me. . . . I was cheating nobody's kindness . . . I could die.

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Midday. In each wave, the sun and a whole jelly-fish. In each clod of earth, a centipede clasp-

ing the day's hot center in its rigidly curved feet. The wind was blowing from Russia and covered us with sand, all but our arms and legs, which we could shake. The Senegalese, taking their siesta in their hole edged with mosaics of pebbles, were doing what we do at midnight; turning, and groaning, and calling on their wise men. War was half asleep, and to spare her fist, was striking only things with a give to them: the sea, the ships — she was attacking the bobbing cistern boat with fury. The *Annam*, the mail boat, was burning in the roadstead, and blackened papers floated all the way up to us. The *Triumph* had been torpedoed, and was sinking; we could hear the crew, drawn up at attention on the deck, chanting her name. The Strait swelled between its two banks as if an enormous submarine were stealing down its center. All the boats were whistling the alarm; all the sirens were screeching, and the ships, suddenly gone blind, maneuvered in the whirlwinds of light with more noise and cautiousness than in the thickest fog. Legionaries were firing volleys at the floating mines. Scarcely visible at the far end of the Gulf, the largest armored cruiser in the world was having an attack of nerves, and shrouded herself at inter-

vals with a golden powder, as flowers throw out pollen at the approach of a noxious insect. Like children who have taken refuge in an organ loft, our men slept on.

But now Affre, the judge, came back from the Cape, dripping with perspiration, and loaded with sweet lemons. He offered them to us with misplaced allusions — for even when he has the Dardanelles under his eyes he always confuses them with the Hesperides — and took us off to bathe. Picking our way over colonials, over legionaries, stretched out side by side — unable till we reached the shore to take a single step shorter or broader than a sleeping man — we came at last to Myrto. Then we went swimming, bumping negroes, who sank at our touch like good hippopotami. As our eyes were on the level of the water, all the shadow we had left took refuge on our heads, and we had only to dive to get rid of it forever.

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Thus we lived, without living too much, through flat and dazzling days; we felt ourselves minute points above the world's joy, and its sorrow; we did not dig our shelters either, because

the water kept coming in. The little hump made by our writing-case under our cloak, which varies in the European soldier as the heart varies among civilians, was always the same size with us, who had no interest in letters—scarcely visible at all. No vile or futile act could be even imagined; one was in plain sight from every side, and not a movement was permitted unless it was acceptable to ten different peoples. An inoffensive, careless world, like worlds of a single sex: without falsifying their story, historians may recount our exploits in the feminine gender, and let it be thought that the armies of the Dardanelles were armies of women. Fabulous evenings. The colonels, made languid by the burning heat, came to cool their hands in the current of the Strait, as in Brittany one goes to warm them in the Gulf Stream. A child of Miramas, the only offshoot of these hundred thousand warriors, went from company to company — a make-believe child — to be admired. The African soldiers were already slipping out of their holes toward the cemetery, to steal the pebbles from the tombs and finish their mosaic design. The French, suddenly realizing how impossible it was that they should n't see the station of the P–L–M again, that there should

not be any more jugged hare or Vouvray for them in this world, were reassured as to their fate and sang in chorus. Every one of their cheeses, too,— Brie, Levroux, Cantal,—was a promise of life; logically, if they reasoned it out, a promise of eternity. The Australians were smoking, with their shirt-sleeves rolled up, not thinking of the future, mortal beings.

War! I hate him who loves you, and I hate him who detests you. The smoke of the kitchens came to us, but crouched in our burrow-like retreat in the depths of the golden sea we resisted their odor. War, why are you not a mere idea in our minds, or why are you not at most limited to a few isolated friends, to a few naked men, as you suddenly were this afternoon, when Jacques and I were coming out of our bath and all the shells fell only on him and me? We could not reach our clothes; we fell to earth like wrestlers who know their strength, Jacques parallel to the tomb of Patroclus, I parallel to Jacques; you obliged us to make all sorts of friendly geometrical figures to escape you. Then the irritated trajectories stupidly lengthened, and the shells left us to fall on the camp and wound Colomb, our lieutenant, and kill poor Coulomb, his orderly — for the simple

folk who bear our names, or almost bear them, are killed in our stead.

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Midnight. The frogs of the Turkish brook were replying to our frogs in their code language, and I only understood what had to do with the weather. . . . An Asian cannon, one millimeter smaller than the French one, made a furious attack upon it, and after this dilation grew peaceful again. Every man of us, sure of his death, got out his farewell letter and confided it to his right-hand neighbor, an immortal.

A day smooth and glossy as wax. What relief can I give to you, what other lonely evening, the evening of a young woman in France, shall I stamp upon you, so that our double soul, our double language, may sometime be born again, and Paris, with its gliding taxis?

III

Five Nights, Five Dawns on the Marne

Five Nights, Five Dawns on the Marne

I

SUNDAY

Sunday, September 6, 1914.

We have been here since one o'clock, all five of us, in a beet-field strewn with sheaves of wheat — flotsam left high and dry by the wave of attack. We bind them firmly together, and stack them; the day of fighting ends with the gestures of the harvester. Some sort of instinct, I suppose, makes us carry the sheaves to the farmhouse on our right, where we stop to rest, the German machine gun in the tree overlooking our huge shadows, and peppering them when it gets a chance. Over yonder some one is creeping along: a man of the telegraph corps, followed by several comrades, twenty yards or so behind him. They have no water — only chartreuse.

Now there are fifteen or twenty of us, for we

have just come across some soldiers in the lee of a haystack. They had miscalculated their position; instead of lying face on to the machine gun, they had turned their backs to it. They move round to the other side of the stack, thanking us as they go; they are glad to be set right, though the view was better where they were. They had the sweep of a whole valley; they could watch all the fires. (So far as one can tell in the darkness, the village of Puisieux is burning; Saint-Pathus, too. I think of the poor mayor, left alone to fight the blaze. Seven houses aflame!) Have we any water? they ask. They have nothing but Liqueur Raspail.

News travels quickly on the battlefield. From time to time a new soldier comes creeping up to us, holding his hand before his face, protecting himself against the machine gun as one shelters a lantern, and gives me a list of the men who have spent the night under his hay stack, and an account of what he has seen on the way; a corpse, a German, two wounded men. From every man who comes up we demand water; he eagerly hands over his canteen, but — here is a miracle we are far from desiring — we invariably find some dregs of cognac, or crême-de-menthe, or

rum instead. Each newcomer's bayonet is still fixed: the last remnant of the charge. As he takes his place in the straw beside us, he removes it, with the innocent gesture of a woman taking off her rings at night, then flings himself down full length.

It is cold, but what utter repose! The men are smoking, taking great care on account of the straw. A corporal (once a masseur at Vichy) is conscientiously kneading his comrades who have stiff backs. He is very popular: his services are preëmpted in advance, as he moves from sheaf to sheaf. He will not allow himself to be hurried, however. He amuses himself by telling each man the names of his various muscles; the corporal, it seems, is a mass of Latin muscles. A haystack is on fire over yonder. My neighbors, who are peasants, discuss its cost. I find out exactly what it is worth; also the value of a single sheaf of wheat — the one I am lying on, for instance. We chew a few grains of this wheat, and find it excellent. It would seem that we are in a rich countryside: splendid poplars, immense beets, abundant harvests. This is no cheap battlefield. If one is a peasant, this fact lends gravity to the fighting — gravity and calm as well. I hear the masseur say that

he saw Michal's body; the bullet had taken him full in the heart. Why did it have to be the masseur, I wonder? Now there is no more hope. . . .

Every now and then German voices float down the wind to us. A soldier comes in, standing erect; he makes the ceiling seem higher, and somehow it becomes easier for us to breathe. Another soldier recognizes me with a shout of joy: "Why, here's the sergeant interpreter!" — and questions me eagerly, as though he had been waiting for me to translate for him everything he had seen during the day. The conversationalists have already won an advantage over the inarticulate spirits which they will keep till their dying day. They talk slowly, recounting the afternoon's adventures as though they were sitting by the fire on a winter's evening. Dollero, resting against my shoulder, listens without moving a muscle to sentences that change the very substance of his heart. Bernard, his best friend, is dead; and his cousin, when the Germans advanced in the darkness, shouting that they were Englishmen, stood up to greet them, — then fell.

The machine gun, better aimed now, breaks loose, the bullets grazing our caps. We stop talking. We are feeling the effects of all the liqueurs

that have been passed around: Bénédictine, kirsch, cognac. We put our lips to the canteen, then hand it to the next man. The alcohol presses all its hot kisses on us. The bullets whine. We think of the word with which we shall acclaim the first one that strikes us; it hangs on our lips, all ready for the impact, and behind it follows a whole procession of other words, waiting for the succeeding bullets. A hundred might strike me, and I should have greetings for each. Names of friends, names of cities, rise within me — Nîmes, Fougères; then come humble workaday words. Could we do less than pay this tribute to houses, to books, to fountain-pens? . . . Suddenly a riderless horse gallops by into the night, dodging blows aimed at him, and drawing a rain of death from the shadows as he passes.

Now the wounded are calling to us from over beyond the poplars. The battlefield opens out. We form patrolling parties: later we shall try to get to some village. The bolder spirits put the timid ones to shame, so that it is these latter who lead the way. We hear them talking as they stop beside the wounded men: —

"Don't make a noise. We're here. Do you see us?"

"Yes."

"It's all right. You're not frightened any more?"

"No."

Away in the distance we hear the colonel himself, answering in that cadenced tone which is the very voice of anguish: —

"Do you feel badly, sir?"

"Yes."

"Are we hurting you, sir?"

"No."

And we carry away as many wounded as we can, as from a fire, to the rear of this crackling, smoking fringe of France.

We are off. Every fifty yards we let the colonel rest a little, and change places. Jeudit, who had lain close by his chief's side since he was wounded, obliging him to feign death when the Germans passed, carries his cap and his sword. He takes entire charge of the poor pale head: now he supports it with his hand, now he makes a pillow of a knapsack stuffed with straw; he wipes the colonel's brow when he is hot; he draws a hood over his head when he is cold. Each soldier, following Jeudit's example, lavishes his solicitude on an arm, a hand, or a shoulder, none venturing, in

his boundless respect, even to think of his commander as a whole. The colonel, out of gratitude, divides himself between us.

"Jeudit! My neck!"

"Dollero! My arm!"

A big countryman stammers out a few words which he has been getting ready ever since we left the haystack: —

"Everything's going finely, sir; everything's going first rate!"

The colonel smiles, and after this he is the one who takes charge of the colonel's heart; who says that we'll win through, that it is cold but such a glorious evening! We take away the cloak of the man who has fewest straps to unfasten and spread it over our chief. He is wandering a bit now: —

"Shut the windows!"

"Yes, sir; we'll shut them," answer the men.

He opens his eyes and sees the burning village. He murmurs, — speaking aloud to avoid thinking, —

"That fire hurts my eyes — it hurts my eyes."

"We'll put it out, sir," answer the men.

Pitiful cries come to us from out of the darkness on all sides: the city-dwellers calling us by our rank, the peasants beseeching us with dumb

plaints that differ according to the regiment to which they belong: "*Holà, holà,*" call the men of the Loire country; those from the north, "*Lo, lo!*" and the Bourbonnais, "*Voilà, voilà!*" I recognize my own men by these cries, which hold up to us, as it were, that which is hurting them, "*Voilà*, my shoulder!" The colonel shudders to hear this moan from a man who is wounded in the same place as he himself.

"Take me, too!" comes the voice.

"We can't do it, old man!"

"But you're taking somebody else!"

"It's the colonel."

That gives them a moment of resignation. Whenever we can we try to come to a halt close to a wounded man. He tells us all about his bad luck, his wound, and when we move on he keeps silent. Then, after we have gone a little way, we hear him calling in torment: —

"Take me, too, colonel! Take me, too!"

We shout that we are coming back. Some of them curse us. Others innocently believe what we say, and give us directions for finding them again.

"I'm just to the left of the big haystack, near the hedge. Do you see? I'll light a match every now and then."

"Bring that man along, too," says the colonel.

"Very well, sir," answer the men.

We leave him lying there, but the colonel thinks a second stretcher is following along behind, and in an effort to be as silent as his soldier, he bites his lips the better to repress his anguish. From time to time an alarm is given: a riderless horse gallops up to us, but we barely touch him before he is off toward the poplars, only to come thundering back from the German hands that reach out for him. Wounded men everywhere. We feel glad when some sullen fellow refuses to look at us, or to answer our questions; glad, too, if they do not call us by name, as one poor man has just done, for to-night our names seem more rawly sensitive than our hearts. Occasionally we make a détour which the colonel cannot understand; it is to avoid a corpse, and the big peasant taken, in his emotion, by another spasm of optimism, stammers out: —

"Everything's going finely, sir. It could n't be better."

The fires die down, then flare up as if fresh fuel had been brought them. The four of us who are not carrying the colonel take the eight packs, the eight guns, the eight cartridge-belts, stooping

as we go to pick up a sword, or another pack, thus making a heavier burden still for those who are to relieve us. From time to time the colonel bids farewell to some wounded man, and tells me to remember his name. They should have had short, simple names, however, — names of week-days, like Jeudit. I have forgotten them all.

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"Get up, my boy!"

A hand awakens me gently. It is a chaplain who has discovered me in the depths of a broken-seated chair. He extracts me with difficulty, pulling aside the shattered splints, and helps me escape from the wreckage of yesterday's Sabbath.

"So the little Boches dropped you there, did they?"

The word "little" is the only antidote that chaplains have been able to discover against the war. They say "the little shell," "the little Crown Prince."

"Come along with me. There's a little sofa in your colonel's room."

At six o'clock I wake up again. Through a hole

in the curtains I get a sample of daylight; it is bright and clear. The cannon are thundering. Never has a traveler, arriving like us at a strange inn at midnight, felt greater curiosity and disquiet. Am I in a city? In a forest? Are we retreating? Have we been victorious? I can get answers to all these questions merely by opening that door, yet I do not hurry. I dress in the darkness, and with the clinking of my accouterments things begin to come back to me. Over there, on the table, lie the objects Jeudit gave me in exchange for his pack: a cap with five stripes, a gold watch, a wallet. Never was a soldier's pack ransomed so dearly. The colonel is asleep in a white bedstead. His *Croix d'Honneur* is pinned to the curtain. I open the door softly and leave the room, abashed, feeling out of place in so august a picture.

Outside, a long corridor, like that of a provincial hotel, with yellow doors opening off it. By the doors lie boots, swords — the belongings of wounded officers. On a high shelf are piled rubber boots and bowler hats — the leavings of the farmhands who used to live here.

"What place is this?"

It is the sort of question one asks when

one's train makes a stop. The orderly does n't know.

"Is it much of a town?"

The orderly says that he arrived here only last night, and has no idea. He thinks, though, that it is very small.

He takes me down a wooden staircase. As I descend the winding steps I begin to see, in a great room, pale heads, sallow heads, bloody heads; the orderly pushes me before him, and before I know what has happened I have wound my way into the very heart of human anguish. The stretchers are fairly overflowing: they lie close-packed, and, in order to reach the door, I must walk all the way round certain wounded men who stare at me, longing to recognize at least one side of me. I lose my way in a labyrinth which brings me up short before the impassable stretcher of a soldier who has fainted dead away. There is no going on; I have to return. The sergeants of the Medical Corps, seeing a fully armed sergeant from upstairs, gruffly ask me my business — for even officers are forbidden to enter here. They move about, these fellows, silencing any man who tries to talk, so that one hears nothing but the groans. The wounded soldiers, uneasy as to the meaning

of the pink or green labels they wear, watch for the label of each corpse as it is carried out, and turn pale or sigh contentedly according as its color does or does not match their own. The overworked doctors, the heavy-eyed quartermasters, I recognize them all; it was I who awoke them yesterday morning. At the end of the room there is a glass door through which one sees into a kitchen where a strapping young woman is walking calmly to and fro. Every now and then she puts her face up against the glass, and all the wounded men with pink labels — the light cases — try to sit up and look at her. Wasps are buzzing about her, seeing in this blonde head a hope of escape. Every time some one cries out in pain, a short-sighted soldier puts on his spectacles and peers about to see who it is.

We are in a village. No church, no town-hall; a nameless village. A ruined distillery still puffs forth its drunkard's breath. On a spur of hill overlooking the plain one sees two roads which cross — their juncture sealed, so to speak, by a spilt barrel of tar. Away off on the horizon, like toys set up for the day's game, bristle the poplar-trees of yesterday, some of them missing now. In the sun-drenched fields, straw-stacks, in whose

shelter move red and purple figures who have no liking for shrapnel, and look as if they were engaged in a ghostly game of puss-in-the-corner. I happen on Bardan and Devaux, who had been told I had a broken rib. They make me lie down, and treat me like a wounded man, though they try not to.

The sun is hot: the crickets are chirping; memories of maneuver-times creep back to deaden the reality of war. Some men of the Bicycle Corps are after nuts among the walnut-trees by the roadside, beating them with poles, and hugging close to the trunks whenever a shell comes along. From here it looks like a series of fights and reconciliations between soldiers and trees. Every now and then one of us seizes a stick, hurls himself on a haystack and whacks it frantically; a shell-fragment has started a blaze. We look about for souvenirs, but, not knowing enough to select only the lightest part of the shell, — its aluminum fuse, — we come back to the village loaded down with shards of cast-iron. Through our field-glasses we see convoys drawn up on the outermost edge of the danger-zone. They form a sort of ring; evidently a circular battle is in progress. We see the horses browsing: we see a sergeant-major sitting in his

shirt-sleeves on a camp-stool; we see peace. Some artillerymen, who are disturbed because we are looking away from the enemy, begin to wonder if we have lost our sense of direction, and come up to turn our gaze eastward once more.

II

MONDAY

Monday, September 7.

On the road again. I am hunting for the flag which Flamond's company has just captured from the Germans.

Night is falling. Stray soldiers trudge along in the ditches; they look as if they were dragging the laden stretchers which follow two hundred yards or so behind. After these latter trail some slightly wounded men who have invented this manner of getting to the relief station without bothering anybody with questions on the way. No dead men here, no dying; this part of the battle-field near the hospital is kept cleared as a sanitary measure. The nearer haystacks and hedgerows are robbed of their wounded, just as the lower branches of an orchard are stripped of fruit. One sees motionless groups: stretcher-bearers who have felt their burden turn heavy all at once lower it to the ground, and go back for a lighter one. Tired feet drag along; in the distance a spasm of coughing; country night sounds. All those who have

been carrying on the day's fighting alone — munition-convoy men, telegraphers — are streaming back to the village; you may know the peasants by the way they say "good-evening" to you. Then one begins to meet fewer passers-by. The road shoulders itself up above the fields, and there, far below me, spreads out the war-infested plain which the infantryman of to-day may only see by risking his head above his loophole. From where I stand it already looks ravaged, with its ploughed fields in disorder, its scars, and all the odds and ends cast up by the earth when it covers dead men — caps, shoes — here a pair of suspenders spread out as if for sale, there a stiff hand reaching up out of a furrow. I plod along. The day will come when, looking back on this solitary walk after years in the trenches, I shall have much the same feeling as if I had walked one evening on the surface of the waters.

Now we are on our way back, in three groups. The first is bringing Captain Flamond, dead with a bullet in his neck. His arms hang down, the fingers purple. Soldiers die with hands full of blood, just as writers die with ink-stained fingers. The men carrying him walk with broken step, just as they have seen the stretcher-bearers do.

Next comes the group with the German flag. (The men were uncertain as to whether they should stretch it over the captain's body, but they had a vague suspicion that this might not be the correct thing. Should they spread it *under* him, perhaps?) It is a great purple flag, black-starred, and decorated with a cross which we remove before the eyes of the prisoners who are following behind. I walk at the end of the procession with a *Fähnrich*, who is already trying to air his French, and turn his captivity to immediate account. Artaud points to me and says that I have been to Berlin. After that the fellow sticks to me like a burr. He comes from Berlin, it seems. I say nothing, but the smell and the accent of Berlin keep me company.

Berlin, the only great city whose name brings with it no vision — toward which the soldiers of her enemies are drawn by vengeance alone! Berlin, all plaster and blue paint, where I arrived the morning of Hegel's birthday. The omnibuses, flag-bedecked, were whirling past in circles with the speed — and the clumsiness — of the sprightliest Hegelian thoughts. Out of the station with me poured such citizens of Magdeburg and Travemünde as had a weakness for Hegel, together with peasant women of the Spree, in cos-

tume, whom I ran across again that evening, scattered among the beer-gardens. Once more I was to meet them all at Weimar, on Schiller's birthday, somewhat oddly celebrated in Goethe's town by a portly crowd in print dresses, whose spirits were already mounting higher at the thought of commemorating Goethe's birthday in Jena of all places! I know why this prisoner from Berlin frets and looks disdainful when our three groups keep colliding with each other on the march. He considers the formation of our procession poor. Frenchmen though we are, he regrets that since we have prisoners we do not know how to make proper use of them to do honor to this war-time twilight. He is quite ready to put himself at the head of his men, carrying the flag, stripped of its cross, point downward. He is ready to make them sing — for they have a prisoners' song with two refrains, one for use if one is victor, the other if one is vanquished. Poor Frenchmen, who have n't a hymn ready for life's every adventure — a hymn of friendship, of springtime, a hymn of the *voyage à trois* (what fun to intone them in the midst of enemies, or in full summer-time, or when there are but two of you!) — and who die, all of them, with-

out knowing whether they are barytones or tenors!

My German, hypocrite that he is, still tries to pass beneath the triumphal arch which stands unshattered in his mind — without the impertinence, however, of those French children in Berlin who used to run through that section of the Brandenburg Gate sacred to the Kaiser alone. He asks me, speaking very loud so that his men may hear, where Paris lies.

"I don't know. I've never been there."

Such is the tenuous veil which I cast over Paris to protect her from these thirty prisoners.

"And my men? What province will they be sent to? Will the railroad cars be open?"

All the prisoners ask this question. It is not that they want air; they want to see. It was the longing for travel which sent them all to war, and they are sadly disappointed at the idea of closed cars. They will be quite content if, from the windows, they can see our cities, and will turn impartially enthusiastic when our countryside grows too beautiful for their German hearts to bear in silence. One of them will be always on the watch that he may wake the whole trainful when there are Gothic churches, châteaux, and poplar-bor-

dered streams to be seen. Could anything be more delightful than this march under the open sky? The moonlight picks out the Frenchmen, one by one, for they go armed: but leaves the Germans to tramp along in darkness. Poor little Frenchmen, with their mobile faces, each with his own rifle, his own life, whereas the German holds the life of the world in trust. . . .

It is midnight when we come up with Captain Lambert, who is writing to his daughters while waiting for the bread convoy to arrive. He used to send one letter for all three of them, but since yesterday each has taken on a separate existence for him. Now he needs three envelopes.

"Are we ever going to get bread?" he asks.

All night long he will get up to put this question to cavalrymen, or despatch-riders, who will feel obliged, because of his rank, to offer him some chocolate or the remnants of a sausage. He always accepts the gift, by the by. The rifle-bullets are making a tremendous racket; we have stuffed cotton in our ears to keep the sound out — all of us except the captain, whom we see jumping up every now and then, turning pale, and then settling down again. His agitation seems a bit absurd to us, just as Ulysses' excitement amused

the sailors whose ears had been stopped. I am keeping my spectacles on, so that I may not lose a moment of sky when I awake.

Now and again, a blade of grass comes to life for an instant beneath my hand, against my cheek, and quivers like a woman's eyelash. Again, suddenly awaking, I see peering down at me a new, unknown face, the very sight of which wearies me, as if I were in some way responsible for it — as if I had to imagine for the first time goodness, suffering, or sadness, according as the face is good, agonized, or sad. These are reinforcements, going forward to the charge. The cotton makes them believe that we have earache, that we are threatened with inflammation, or that our teeth are giving us trouble; sympathetic, yet annoyed that so much suffering must be, they go away, shrugging their shoulders toward God.

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Four o'clock. Everything is silent. The burning villages, with no one to watch them, flickered out sullenly before dawn. Cold, dew, everything that can turn a man's limbs to stone, has showered down on us out of the night. The quiet is astonishing. I remember the cotton in my ears

and remove it, fearing that I have been reveling in an artificial stillness, but nothing is to be heard here save the tick of a watch, and over yonder a squeaking barrow. Never did day in war-time come on more noiselessly. Here and there, out of the ditches and furrows, men are stumbling up and rising to their full height, just as though there were no such thing as war; then, remembering suddenly, they crouch down again and try to straighten their cramped fingers out of harm's way. Not a word. No one wishes to give the day an excuse for beginning; no one will betray these hundred thousand men who are trying, in the dawn's glow, to pretend it is still night; no one brushes the dirt from his uniform, or grinds coffee, or starts off to fetch water. A soldier near by is unfolding a letter; the sound of the crumpled pages makes one think of bedtime at boarding-school, when the proctor, with one shoe already off, clicked his tongue sternly behind his curtains. Turpin is snoring again. Then suddenly the first cannon goes off, the shell goes wailing over our heads; and our little make-believe is shattered.

I start forth to wake my scouts, who are scattered far and wide, like a shattered compass. They struggle up, growling oaths that gather force as

they go the rounds: *Ah, Vingt Dieux! Ah, Millé-dieux!* Their faces show swollen, moist, greenish, as though it had been necessary, to make them sleep, to hold their heads under water — in the river of oblivion, perhaps. Poor heads! Their mothers would take them between their hands, weeping, as though they had found them severed from their sons' bodies. One of them emerges from his dream before our eyes, as though he had fallen from Roanne or Vichy.

"Why wake us?" they all ask. Then they remember that they still have a crust of bread; that a couple of sardines still remain in that open box hidden under a tree: this modest bait suffices to lure them back into war once more.

We have not even the poor consolation of relaxing and stretching our limbs: the general in person has just taken up his position at our cross roads; his leopard-skin despatch-bag, swollen with papers, lies on the ground, and he kneels beside it, fumbling, like a priest consulting the entrails for omens. We are to attack, it seems. Major Gérard and his companies are to assault Nogeon. It was they who woke us in the night, wondering what had become of us. They struck lights the better to see us, and scrutinized us as

one reads a paper. Not having yet tasted battle, they kept asking civilians' questions: —

"Was Michal unconscious? Did he know he was dying?"

Our four companies are now marching by, the dawn light falling full in their faces. Every man stands out sharply in the harsh glow — every hand, every feature; it is for no chance engagement they are arming us with all this light: a hand-to-hand fight is before us. Soldiers you have barely seen for a month come up, talk about their families, let you heft the weight of their lives, so to speak, give you a handclasp and then pass on, cheered afresh because they see you have faith in them. In the little lane by the orchard, each section narrows out in order to pass by the body of Captain Flamond as it lies there, stretched out under a cloak; the section halted nearest him outlines his form, as it were, like the mound of earth that will cover him.

The general takes each captain aside and shows him an order. All read quickly and bow assent, some smiling, others a bit pale — all except Viard, who has to have the maneuver explained to him on the terrain itself, the general making him count the poplar-trees, as though he were doing

the multiplication table. Perret, always methodical and paternal, draws his men round him and, as is his custom, repeats the order to each one.

"So much the worse for you," says he to a couple of late-comers. "Now you won't know anything."

Then he makes every man hand over to Dollero the odds and ends taken from the Germans, which would mean sure death if he were to fall into the enemy's hands. Dollero is soon covered with helmets, spurs, and white sword-knots, striped with green.

"What would they do to me if they took me prisoner now?" he remarks.

Captain Jean passes on the order to his favorites; Viard, to his sergeants; Perrin, to the most intelligent; then off we go, led, according to the company we are in, by friendship, rank, or cleverness. Halfway to Nogeon, a lieutenant of dragoons asks Perrin for two subalterns to help cut off the stream of stray soldiers who are going and coming between the poplar-trees and Fosse-Martin. Mourlin and I are chosen.

We follow the ditches by the roadside, stopping soldiers and questioning them.

"Where are you going?"

"To the village."

"What for?"

They reply, guilelessly, that they are going to rest; and when we order them to right-about-face they look at us as though we had betrayed their confidence. A little ashamed of ourselves, we offer them a swallow of cool water. They drink, and, thinking they have got on the good side of us, set out again for Fosse-Martin. We take them by the arm, however, and swing them around toward Nogeon, which is in flames. They start off, the surlier spirits shrugging their shoulders. We keep on our way, using the haystacks for shelter and dodging this way or that, according as the shells come from Puisieux, or Vincy, or Bouillancy. At the foot of each stack we find something to eat — leavings of the early breakfast: here a scrap of bread, there a spattering of jam; since they cannot in decency present us their wheat, the stacks offer what they have. A stack with a letter. A stack with an unexploded German shell, and, on the French side, the mocking emptiness of a wine-bottle. A stack from which two motionless boots stick out. Mourlin takes hold of one, I of the other; we pull, cautiously at

first, but we can feel that the soldier resists and is unwounded. He wriggles. He is wondering what he will catch if it is a colonel — two colonels, perhaps — tugging at his legs. Out he comes. He has been asleep there since yesterday.

"Sneaks!" he says to us. "How much do they pay you to do their dirty work?"

We let fly a box on the ears, a kick or two; he tries to defend himself, but gets a couple of whacks for his pains, and makes off toward the poplars, horribly offended.

Along the roadside lie yesterday's wounded, overtaken by dawn and its shrapnel before they could get to cover. Here and there a soldier helps himself along with his rifle, the stock under his arm, the muzzle to earth. Groups of three, their arms entwined, struggle ahead, the most severely wounded man in the middle. They turn very slowly when some one calls to them; like Laocoön and his sons, they are hampered and tormented by an invisible serpent. We pass a mere boy of a corporal who seems to have strange ideas as to the fate of a wounded man, for he tries to give us a letter for his family. Over yonder lies a thread of blood which, instead of coming away from the fighting, leads toward it. Here are two soldiers

of my regiment, greatly amused because the same bullet wounded them both — one in the head, the other in the foot. Mourlin sends them into convulsions of mirth by asking what the deuce they were doing together. We pass a little chap, in agony, who drops to his knees like a stricken beast when he reaches the end of his strength, and falls full length on the ground. After him a big fellow, walking slowly and evenly amidst all of his limping comrades, and taking infinite care, for he has a bullet in his lungs. In spite of this he flings himself down when a shell lands near by; then, inch by inch, rises again, as slowly as a child grows. Here is a lieutenant with his skull laid open, whose hand, groping for his eyeglass, flutters near his brain. Behind the haystacks which have been found out by the enemy's artillery lie heaps of terribly wounded men who, for fear of offering a better mark, drive away the less seriously wounded, as from a raft at sea. Some have stripped off their greatcoats and march along in their shirtsleeves, hoping that the Germans will not fire on them. Above all the groans a loud cry rings out; a wounded man has been hit a second time, and so there is a jet of fresh blood, a fresh vivid scream amid all this dull whimpering.

Then, all of a sudden, a regiment of reinforcements charges by in close waves toward Nogeon, sweeping the highway and meadows clear of wounded men for a minute, as if they had been miraculously healed and had fallen into step. Strange faces, all; and in war time one somehow thinks of every unknown soldier that he has no personal interest at stake — that he is fighting for one. The shadows of these newcomers cower to the left, away from the sun, and Nogeon receives only faces and bodies lighted by the glare. They advance parallel with the road, and every man that falls drops into the line of the furrows. They enter Nogeon; almost immediately the distillery sticks out tongues of flame. In ten minutes it is all ablaze with a sullen fire, the tall chimneys doing their best with the smoke, out of sheer habit. The soldiers emerge again and withdraw to the rear; they are followed by stragglers — the braver spirits, and those who best resist the heat — a crimson-faced rear guard, leisurely withdrawing, and yielding the fire a bare ten yards. Out leaps a man from the very flames. Here comes another. . . . That is the end. Glowing papers and embers whirl about, the soldiers taking pains to catch them and put them out

with a clap of the hands when they fall near an officer, just as children catch moths to please the mistress of the house.

Our lieutenant of dragoons has come back at a gallop. He no longer has the same horse; neither has Danglade, who passes by with orders. Every cavalryman reappears on the battlefield with a mount which he knows and likes less and less, so that by nightfall the death of his horse affects him not at all. Again the little procession begins to trickle along over to the right of Nogeon; we must once more stop the poor fellows who have found a pretext for seeking a bit of rest. We requisition the services of a little corporal of the Sixtieth Regiment, a timid lad of twenty-two, who only ventures to accost the beardless soldiers, and who, instead of shouting his orders, runs and plants himself in the way of the man he is trying to stop, like a dog. We meet some wily deserters who pretend they have been sent for water, and have unfolded their canvas water-bottles. Others, more modest, ask only for a little shade. Here is a zouave who, to distract my attention, shows me a Prussian revolver and tries to lead me to a shell-hole a hundred yards away where, he says, a lot of Germans are still wearing their spec-

tacles. It is my turn to resist now. Then come some older men, with fine, hard faces, who find it annoying to be sent about their business by two whippersnapper sergeants. One fellow takes his revenge by fixing his eyes on Mourlin's nose, which the sun has turned bright red. (Every few minutes afterwards Mourlin asks for my pocket-mirror.) In this reflex there occasionally appears one of our own men, who says simply, "So-and-so has been killed." It costs one death, at least, to meet an acquaintance to-day. Here is a soldier, deathly pale, to whom I point out an aeroplane while slipping a rifle into his hand, just as one cajoles a child into eating soup. Now and then comes a *liaison* soldier, returning from the brigade full of hard words about the village, where he has found neither water nor bread — nothing but shrapnel and, more particularly, the general, who took him for a deserter and threatened him from afar with his revolver. He rushed up, waving his despatch-case, then fled without waiting for an answer.

"Well, let's be going on," say the others.

We are holding the stray men we meet now. The lieutenant wishes to collect fifty or so, then bring them back in sections. Those who come up

are amazed at being received as though we expected them, and take the places pointed out to them without a word.

"Forward, march!"

The lieutenant, who wants to be rid of his horse, simply lets him go, and we advance. The bullets are flying lower and lower, so that we must crawl. Now and then a man gets wedged between two huge beets and extracts himself with difficulty.

Here we are at the poplars. We have fallen in with a company deployed as skirmishers, which receives us without enthusiasm in its ditch, for we have momentarily disturbed its comfort. The Germans are over yonder, thirty yards distant — among them a big fellow who rises up every few minutes; nobody can succeed in sniping him. This interests us newcomers exceedingly. There he is: a gray-green back suddenly floats above the tops of the beets. Two shots go off; up he bobs again. Many a Frenchman whose only sight of the enemy has been that poor jumping-jack. By evening, they get him.

All is quiet again. This is the hour when the first lines on both sides, worn out, form the only neutral zone in all the two countries and do no

more than mount guard before the battle. Our second lines may snipe at the German second line; our cannons may blaze away at their howitzers, our civilians may hate their civilians: we shall not shoot. We reserve our wrath, rather, for a company of our own reinforcements, fifty yards back of us, which insists on taking us for wounded. The captain, greatly excited, shouts that he is coming to deliver us, and also keeps yelling, "*Vorwärts! Vorwärts!*" to stir up the Germans. Mourlin, to calm them, yells still louder a German word which he wrongly believes to mean, "Quiet!" The two voices battle for the mastery, while the Saxons, fearing some trick, lie still before us, wondering what the French can be getting ready to do when they bellow forth in the Imperial language, "Peace! Peace!"

Day has begun.

III

TUESDAY

Tuesday, the 8th.

THE sun has set. For a while, however, we keep on firing along the furrows, just as one fires down the tunnel of a shooting-gallery at a country fair. A German aviator makes the most of the dying glow by coming to spy down upon my company. Full five minutes he wheels over us. He does not miss a single gesture. He can tell von Kluck: "Mourlin is still sunburnt; Dollero is reading a letter which begins, 'My angel boy'; Giraudoux is munching beets as he waits for night to come on with her armament." We close our eyes, starting sharply when our drowsiness clashes within us against sleep itself. No trenches here; we leave on the earth nothing save the imprint of our bodies; aboveground we still find that resignation and confidence for which we shall later have to dig deep, and still deeper. We have just had a visit from a soldier, an honest fellow who crawled up to us and halted there,

good-humored and smiling, his arms folded up under him like a dog's forepaws — risking his life to catch a centipede and throw it at us, its feet all waving frantically. Every now and then Jalicot shouts, "Surrender!" to tease the Germans, who are unable to see the joke and reply, "No, no!" in throaty French, so that there will be no possible mistake. Then, in their turn, they call on us to surrender, and we reply, in chorus, with one single word. They are annoyed; did they not answer us politely? Over to the right, on the slightest pretext, blare the bugles of the *chasseurs alpins*, who are dimly to be seen standing on the sloping ground, like pines on a mountain-side. They are reservists — of a more musical turn than their juniors. An alarm shivers along the length of the French lines, and we fling ourselves down on our sides to fix bayonets, some of the men facing their comrades, others turning their backs. Beneath these stars, beneath the bullets which no longer meet the earth leveled out under the night, the impression occasionally comes to us of a brooding splendor beneath which we creep, infinitesimally small; we move leisurely about, like stage-hands, who, by gently agitating a sheet, simulate quiet water in the theater.

Midnight. We have buried ourselves in a pit, and those not on duty are joining us. Here comes the captain, the man of all men whom we are least eager to see, for he snores. As we lie all in a heap, our legs pinned down by heavy legs, unknown arms — we prefer not to know whose — embrace us. Now and again one defends one's head stubbornly against a knee, a shoe, another head. Sometimes a newcomer, not knowing that weapons have been laid aside, drops down on us with his rifle. Violent and anonymous kicks are launched against an unfortunate leg which turns out to be the captain's. A soldier down at the bottom shivers, giving the living mass a feverish motion; two late-coming guests, generously spread their cloaks over the whole crowded pit. An officer, on his rounds, orders us to get up; we answer not a word; whereupon he threatens us, so that our captain must needs stick out his head and command us, like our consciences, not to stir from our position. A soldier who has just been wounded stops near us, asks the way to the casualty station, and, in an outburst of generosity, places at the edge of our hole certain objects which he names as he lays them down: new knapsack straps, some sausage, a knife.

He is with us again in a minute. He has not found the casualty station; besides, he is suffering a twinge of regret about the knife, which he takes back again. Before he has time to be off, the bullets are flying in gusts. From all four corners of the plateau the machine guns are rattling like dead men's bones. One of our cannon is firing wildly in the direction of Germany. The bugle-blasts of the *chasseurs alpins* ring out, then break off short, as though all the musicians had rushed forward to pick up a wounded man. One of the soldiers at the bottom of our heap tries to free himself; the others make themselves heavier, to keep him quiet. He keeps moving convulsively, until, the resistance crushed out of him, he gives up.

One o'clock. We are returning to Fosse-Martin by the road — silent, sullen. Friendship keeps us close together, and each one leans on a comrade, but we have developed an unspeakable obstinacy. No one yields an inch to any one else. Dollero tries to make me eat the bread he has left.

"Eat this bread."

"Keep it yourself."

"You won't, won't you? Well, look!"

He throws it away; and God alone knows what bread meant to us that night.

"Throw it away. I don't care."

Then he sees that the rheumatism in my shoulder is not improving, and insists on carrying my rifle. We struggle. He hurts me. I hurt him still more, it seems, for I can see the tears in his eyes.

Fosse-Martin! Out in the little square the wounded soldiers, their teeth chattering, do not know whether it is death or only the cold. To some of us they call for the doctor, to others for a blanket, a Seminarist who does not venture to say, "I am dying," murmurs, "I no longer exist." In the overtaxed hospital a delirious soldier is counting in a sing-song voice, and dies just as he reaches the number of his own years. On the road, an officer points with his finger to the light in the general's window, which is reflected in the horse-trough directly below it, and stupidly remarks to his neighbor: "Really, it's like Bruges — exactly like Bruges, you know!"

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The sky, the trees are dumb. Speech seems to have been withdrawn from the scattered brigades.

Never has it cost so dear to utter a single word; those soldiers who rise for a moment to stretch their arms seem to be apostrophizing the night in sign-language. One wakes up suddenly, stung by the cold on some unprotected surface of wrist, or calf, or neck, and wraps a handkerchief round the spot as one dresses a wound. The man nearest the snoring captain has been whistling softly for fifteen minutes, not daring to touch him. A telegrapher has tangled a sleeping comrade in his wire; for a whole half-hour he tries to work him free without waking him. Sleep everywhere — sleep, and that respect for life which one holds in times of peace. By way of reinforcement the dragoons, as soon as they have tended their horses, come and fling themselves down to the rear of us, forming a second snoring line of sleepers.

Four o'clock. I see a man who yesterday lost his dearest friend open vacant eyes, remember everything, and close them again. Sabots clattering down the road, greenish light, an acid breeze — everything that used to fill your heart with despair in springtime, long ago, at the dawn of a day whose sweetest hours you had been tasting in anticipation — then you remember where you are.

You get to your feet as though you had been

sleeping on the coping of a bridge, taking care instinctively to lean away from the direction of the battlefield. You see the frontier marked out, so to speak, by that chain of exhausted soldiers. For a second a wave of ingratitude sweeps over you toward all those civilians back in France who are thinking of you. Why must they exist? But for them, war would be beautiful. Then comes repentance, and, out of sheer affection for them, you begin to think of yourself with a tenderness much like theirs. "Poor old fellow," you say to yourself. You call yourself by your first name, and by the nicknames they give you. Courage flows back into you, and you steal the best rifle and the best bayonet from the men who are still sleeping. A cheerful sergeant-major is waking his men by tickling them with spears of grass. "Hey, old sport," he says to each one, "take a look at your watch." The old sports open yellow eyes and leaden mouths which seem to engulf the very morning. Then, in the dawn light — a sundial without sun — our little matutinal cannon roars, while at the very same instant a big shell drops in from Germany, covering us with stones, dirt, and shreds of turf. The old sports stagger to their feet, cursing, and to-day begins.

A superb day. The sun leaps from cloud to cloud, gilding the one on which it rests for the moment. The sky is light blue with a few dark spaces. From those ash-trees yonder the shells are bringing down showers of foliage; autumn is at work upon them, too, but to her touch the yellowing leaves yield only one by one. No orders as yet; that means an hour of idleness. The road is full of lightly wounded men who had no wish to get lost during the night, tramping gayly along now, each with his splinter of grenade, or bullet just under the skin, where one can feel it. Here comes Trinqualard, shot in the left arm. In exchange for the news that yesterday we took a hundred prisoners, he hands me over a real live German whom he is bringing back from Puisieux. We play with the fellow a moment; he becomes tame, and is anxious not to leave us. When a shell drops near by, however, he groans and bewails his lot. We shout to him to be silent.

"How *can* one be silent in such a war?" he replies.

Now we are meeting new convoy men, new drivers who are under fire for the first time. They are tearing along, their eyes full of curiosity and dread, asking where the Germans are. Is it

the Prussian Guard? What are the commonest wounds? Are we winning? They wear little gaiters such as one sees in countries where there are snakes, and, in the midst of our dull life, they lead all day long a fevered existence, their identification discs very much in evidence, rushing here and there to help carry any one's pack, any one's rifle — new servants of the battlefield, with the names of children, wives, relatives, everything they have to lose trembling on their lips; unexpectedly distributing tins of sardines and pineapple, and falling flat at the faintest breath from a bursting shell, as though they were lighter than we.

The wind comes from the east; not one of our words will be carried toward the enemy, so we talk and laugh, heedless of noise. The cavalrymen, too, turn their horses loose when they have dismounted, and pay no more attention to them, knowing they can only wander among friends and that they can be caught again at Meaux, at Tours, or even at Bordeaux. The air is light. We expand in the freedom of it all, advancing as skirmishers through the fields in order to prepare the coming assault. We visit the haystacks and mounds, and from each one — just as one extracts a bullet from

under the skin by pressing on each side of it — we squeeze out a groaning German, wounded yesterday or the day before. There can be no vestige of doubt about these fellows: did we not wound them ourselves? We have pierced their lungs, their heads, their thighs, or — by way of a little Christian lesson — the palms of their hands. Each one of them trails along behind his own Frenchman, — a little clumsier, a little weaker than his leader, but scarcely less calm. The lips of both are a trifle greedy and scornful, for they have just traded tobacco and are sampling it.

Our orders have arrived. The division commander has issued an urgent call for men who can speak Turkish. One need only know Turkish, it seems, in order not to be killed to-day. A last resort, this; for one has been searching in vain in the depths of one's soul for a single word — let alone a whole language — which will serve as talisman and save one's life. No one in our company knows Turkish; no one, in a prodigious effort to live, suddenly acquires it. Horn knows Danish and offers himself rather hopelessly to the sergeant-major, who takes down his name. All day long he will be making trips to headquarters and coming back again — a poor spurned Hamlet.

"Bergeot knows how to talk the Auvergne dialect," shouts Forest.

Each one then airs the accomplishments of his friends. Jalicot, we learn, speaks the language of the Pions, who live at La Palisse; Charles knows Tunisian, Pupion the *patois* of Charlieu. Masseret makes sounds like a partridge, Dollero imitates a motor-bus. . . . Then the captain whistles.

In five minutes we are off again toward the poplars. We get control of ourselves, we make everything ready; then, each man — as though, far from desiring a talisman against death, he wished to insist on his vulnerability — says good-bye to the captain in his very best French, and calmly writes a last post-card, reading it over when he has finished, for mistakes in spelling.

IV

WEDNESDAY

Wednesday, the 9th.

THE day has gone well. We were all happy and clear-headed. We have fought a good battle, just as we should have turned a good bargain or set a good table, in civil life, according to our respective trades. For the fourth time we are on the way back to Fosse-Martin, tattered and torn now, and bearing, every man of us, the traces of a hand-to-hand fight with the Germans or with the earth. As we lie here close by the corpses of those soldiers from Nassau who tried to bar our way yesterday evening, we think of to-morrow, when we shall spread a Saxon carpet over the earth. What a magnificent evening. The silence alone is enough to bring us to our feet again. For the first time to-day we are standing upright, feeling clumsy and overgrown — leaning for support against Captain André's stretcher as we try to learn to keep our balance all over again. André, facing the certainty of death, relieves his tormented fancy in questions; but as he is ashamed to talk

about himself, he pretends he is thinking of Captain Flamond, who was killed on Monday. Where did they put Flamond's sword? — his despatch-case? Where was he buried? To which we reply as though Flamond, who cared less than nothing about all that, had become in the last hour of his life a fond, solicitous family man: his sword and despatch-case are already on the way back to Roanne, under seal; and Flamond, we swear, will be buried in a real coffin.

Here we are back at the field hospital once more. On the very first stretcher lies Courtois, our reserve sergeant-major. We stop while he has a word with Chalton, the active sergeant-major, who talks down at him without bending over, for he has a bullet in his eye. "This is death to sergeant-majors!" they say, trying to laugh; then Courtois, shot through the lung, begins to worry about himself, and asks pointed questions to which we reply in vague terms, for we know that soldiers all about us, with shattered legs and pierced vitals, are listening to every word. To full a hundred men oxygen is being administered — they lie there gasping, far more like fish pulled out of the water than soldiers withdrawn from the battlefield. Beneath their collapsed faces lie,

withered and dead, the secrets that gave their lives value: road-menders who think no longer of roads, teamsters who have lost all interest in their carts, frank-visaged men whose eyes now leer. We have questions to ask of the soldiers of our own company: —

"What about Jalicot?"

"He's all right; but Vergniaud has been killed."

"And Pupion?"

"All right, but Béreire's dead."

Tragic ransoms, these! What dead man's name is thrown into the balance against my name, if any one happens to ask after me?

But Charles is calling us to the door of a little house. He has something to drink. What a curious sensation to be in a room! Once the door is closed, our hearts swell until it would seem the four walls could scarcely hold them. We drink, and our dearest secrets come forth. Drigeard talks of his wife, Charles of his little daughters. Photographs come popping out of our pockets as though under some unseen pressure, and in this cramped space all the thoughts that were pent up during four days of battle in the open take form and shape again. It will be an heroic task to get them all back inside us again when the time comes

for us to leave the house, and I dare say one or two will escape, to haunt us all the evening. Charles thinks that the fighting will soon be over — one or two more engagements, perhaps, on the Meuse, the Somme, and finally on the Rhine. For though we are fighting in a countryside barren of springs and brooks, the rivers are already gliding into our conversation and persistently bestowing their names on our battles. . . .

We have caught up with the captain at the crossroads. He has climbed up the steps of the little Calvary and hooked his arm around the wrought-iron cross, scanning the fields from this perch like a pilot. A company of soldiers is at work digging trenches in front of our ditch, and from time to time a head emerges just opposite me — always the same head, belonging to a fellow with big mustaches who takes a fancy to me. When he feels I need livening up he showers me with dry earth and laughs. He hands me everything he comes across in his digging — a cricket, a piece of an old cartridge dropped by some huntsman; he asks the name of a plant which he calls *chevrebis*. He has never known its real name, he says. Then he turns playful — like a dog retrieving pebbles, he throws me an empty can which he

gets back again on the head, to his huge delight. He can't resist digging his way in my direction, and pretends to telephone me through a root he has picked up. After every shrapnel explosion he disappears, to come back again with the names of the wounded, for everything with a name interests him. He asks me mine. When Drigeard comes along with the coffee I pass him my steaming cup; in order to return it he climbs out of his trench and we find ourselves face to face, embarrassed, like two people who, after corresponding for years without meeting, arrange a rendezvous at a railway station. My neighbor is bashful, but happy. He examines with great care the end of his root, and informs me that it is black acacia; then all of a sudden, as though he were missing a train, he leaps back into his ditch. Twice afterwards I see his head, never again the whole of him.

Night is coming on; the regimental butchers are hunting a stray ox by trailing him along the line of trenches, which he could not cross. The German howitzers, one by one, have held their tongues, only a little French field-piece continuing to use up the ammunition of its more indifferent brothers. Workmen and wounded soldiers stream

past under a fire of questions from the general, who cannot help showing warmer concern for the men shot in the arm than for those with leg wounds. With our elbows on the earth banked up before the trenches, we enjoy the scene before us: cavalrymen shrouded in their cloaks, volunteers coming up to the camp-fire to give their names for patrol duty, their heads all crimson in the blaze. Each man of us longs to have at his side the person who would respond best to such a night: the captain thinks of his father, Drigeard of his old head master, Dollero of Alfred de Vigny.

From time to time an alarm flashes through the lines on its way from the Oise to the Meuse, and the rifle-fire crashes for a moment. . . .

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Dollero has been restless since three o'clock. He is hungry; he wakes me by pulling away the knapsack with which he had wedged me into place. Drigeard gently rouses the captain, who is sprawling over his coffee-bag. Every one had gone to sleep last night on the most precious belonging of some one else, and we begin the day with apologies instead of brutally shaking one another into consciousness. I wander about among

my *liaison* soldiers, hesitating as to whom I shall pick out to awaken first, and finally selecting a man who seems to be sleeping uneasily — he has a good-natured face, too, and will be less likely to curse me. I lean over and pry open his eyelids with my fingers, holding them apart for a minute. . . . Sight slowly fills them. Then I leave him to arouse his comrades.

For a full hour the silence lasts. The horses trail off to drink, and not a shell bursts near the watering-trough. Over yonder we see the artillerymen greasing their guns, crawling under them, hanging on the carriages little cans of paint or turpentine, as though to catch some beneficent resin from the cannon themselves. Such is the general peacefulness that the company cobbler accepts a boot and starts to repair it. The soldier who owns the boot stands in torment: suppose the battle were to break again at just this moment! A second man begins to unfasten his laces, however, and a third kicks off both boots in anticipation. Not once, for a whole month, have we entered into a day, as one would wade into quiet water, with bare feet. Now the doctors are strolling up to our line; the heart of the village is no longer to be found in the hospital, but beats in

our midst. Already the soldiers are taking up the work they had laid aside until peace should be signed — carving German gun-stocks, hammering out rings, gathering up shell-cases in baskets. Still not a sound from the cannon.

The moment we had selected for the end of the war has already passed; we add another quarter of an hour, for good measure, then a half an hour — a whole hour — gradually accustoming ourselves to the idea of peace just as we shall, later on, regain the rear of the trenches through *boyaux* which grow broader and broader, more and more generous. We do not dare guess what this respite may mean, though Artaud is of the opinion that all the Boches have been stifled by gas-shells. We no more dare look closely at this hour of ease than an alchemist dares peer into his retort after his fire has gone out.

The captain is making over his regiment with six companies instead of twelve. We collect all the muster-papers which some unknown soldier, passing in the night, has slipped into our hands or laid on our bodies; we shake every faggot, every sheaf of wheat in order that not a name may escape; all told, we remain seven hundred men, three captains, six lieutenants. Henceforward we

may count on them all, for the stretchers are returning empty from their morning sally — all but one, from which a soldier shouts to us that he is the last of the wounded. Barbarin, who was bringing his Alsatian field journal up to date when the fighting began, resumes the work once more, and makes me spell out the names for him.

"What was that village before Thann?"

"Aspach."

"And the village where we saw the chicken?"

"Bellemagny."

Rations are being distributed. It is a sour bread they give us, made of wheat that knew not the sun. We were counting on their bringing the usual two thousand rations, but the lieutenant of the supply-convoy, a man without bowels, took it for granted that death had been busy among us, and calmly cut down the rations to one thousand. Here comes Guillemard, in a motor-car, straight from the Invalides, whither he took our German flag. General Gallieni presented him with a medal and fifty francs. It was his first trip to Paris; he tells us that he was able to see the Eiffel Tower for at least ten kilometers on the way back, as he was sitting with his back to the chauffeur. He has no news at all; he forgot to ask how things were

going, and the general only talked to him about his family. Next time we send a flag to Paris we shall see to it that a newspaper, at least, is brought back to us.

Seven o'clock. One of the other sergeants and I can stand it no longer. Off we go, by bicycle, toward the poplars that line the road to Nogeon, pedaling frantically. It is as though a dam had given way before us. Infantrymen, stripped to the waist and mounted on stray horses they have picked up, gallop along barebacked beside us, and instead of entering into conversation we find ourselves racing with them. Out in the fields soldiers are burying the dead in broad trenches, placing them close together, or separating them widely according to their ideas of what death means. If one of the corpses is too tall for the trench, they lay him in sidewise across the others, rather than bend his knees. The patrols are out scouring the country for saplings or heavy timber — according to the strength of their belief in God — to mark the graves, each man returning with unhewn wood to make a light or heavy cross. Little fires spring to life, in which they heat their bayonet-points red-hot in order to inscribe the names of the dead; dead horses, soaked with kerosene, are

blazing; sergeant-majors are parsimoniously distributing quicklime and following us with hostile eyes, curious to know what business a mere sergeant may have in front of the lines. Motionless cloud-shadows stain the fields like bruises. One and all the men are thin, haggard — reduced to a strange common likeness by the meager Biblical diet they have so long endured, with its dry, monotonous bread and meat, meat and bread. The silence is that deadly prehistoric calm that existed before the friendly little animals, such as cocks, birds, and cats, had been evolved. High and dry on a hillock, as though left there by a flood, lies an old ark of a cart, its wheels shattered; from under it a man with a limp arm is drawn, poor lonely soul. One catches the metallic clink of the identification discs which a soldier of the Engineering Corps is busy stringing on a shoe-lace, like some ghastly Chinese currency bartered for our dead. Yonder lie the unfamiliar bodies themselves, laid out in a row, each man with a leg doubled up, or an arm lifted, or a frowning eyebrow, or a head screwed obstinately to the side, as though by prearrangement, so that his best friend might recognize him by this posture. Wasted, ethereal beyond belief is one

of them; and the grave-diggers recoil from burying this ghost.

At Nogeon, when we reach it, Major Gérard is at last discovered — he has been lying face-downward on the ground ever since Tuesday morning, and dies as they turn him over. We take the road to Vincy, quite deserted, involuntarily shrinking toward the right, where the dead Frenchmen lie thinly scattered. The mud-stained purple-and-red of their uniforms seems fresh and vivid now; their beards have grown; they were already veterans when they knocked at the gates of the next world. We seldom see their faces though; the colors of their uniforms contrive somehow to rise above their bodies and float over the tops of the beets. Here and there a bayonet sticks out; rifles flung aside during the assault stand upright in the earth. We see a dead man still on his feet who will fall to earth of his own weight, if help does not soon come; another has dropped across the tripod of a machine-gun: all these soldiers of France seem to have been stricken by lightning. But on the German side it has been a real massacre; gray corpses, without weapons, their faces so dead-looking that they seem to have been killed after flinging themselves down to die;

heaped-up bodies, where the men lying beneath seem at times less dead than those on top. Did they rush to battle with instructions to be killed? At the foot of every poplar one sees bodies all shattered, as though they had fallen from the top limbs.

But there go the bugles at Fosse-Martin. We must hurry back.

Orders have arrived that we must hold ourselves in readiness — what for? To advance or to retreat? Are we to fall back again on that dismal chain of Parisian suburbs or is ours to be a prouder objective — Soissons, Laon, Coblenz? We are wrung with suspense, like collegians at examination-time. To ease the tension, we take a last walk to the hospital, empty save for one dying man, an object of deep interest to a group of soldiers with boils and sore fingers who have undergone the ministrations of the doctor this morning.

But the bugle orders us on again; from the doorway I see Drigeard in the distance putting on his pack; he points excitedly down the village street, his gesture seeming to indicate the high-road beyond, and to say — I still shudder at the memory — that we are going to retreat.

But he is pointing to the general, on horseback, his arm stretched out towards us, waving us forward.

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The tree which blocked the road has been cut away; the poplars stand stripped at the edge of the sidewalk, like raised barriers at a grade-crossing. Whistles sound forth to call back the more eager spirits, who have crossed the embankment and are proceeding cautiously, entering the open country as one fords a stream. We are off at last — but the general staff has reckoned the time of starting, and the distances, as though our regiment were unchanged; our two battalions are lost in a roadway too large for them. Disregarding the mile posts, we close up between more modest boundaries.

It is like setting out for a second war. We scarcely know where we are. The survivors of the companies which have suffered most heavily have been distributed among the others; they cling together, however, and confusion results. Big men, little men, all haphazard; Berquin, the huge fellow who towered like a column in the distance, now stands only ten yards away from us,

making us feel that our eyes are playing us tricks. This same relentless far-sightedness shows us distinctly the officer at the head; and every soldier whose face was formerly a mere blur has developed real features, which scrutinize us. Beards and hair have grown long. Boots and gaiters, parched and ungreased for days, look as though they encased dead limbs. In one section silence prevails; the garrulous spirits have all been killed. In another, the same fate has evidently met the good-natured men, for the faces of the survivors are dour. Every one is thinking intensely of himself; the cooks, overabundant now, are painfully aware that they will be transferred to some other task; orderlies whose officers have been killed are sharply on the trail of other officers who have lost their orderlies. The company horse is seized upon by a second lieutenant who, poor rider that he is, imitates instinctively the gestures and mannerisms of the dead captain. During the halts one starts, by mere force of habit, to look for absent comrades, absent officers, until one finds one's self all alone, and hastens for consolation to the rear of the regiment, where the changes have been less sweeping, — where one still finds Doctor Mallet, and Laurent, and all those friends who have suc-

ceeded in keeping body and soul united; and the horse from Ramonchamp, too, which can't be caught and follows us unbridled, — everything, in short, that was permanent in our past.

The poplars have been left behind on the right; we are going to follow the battle-line of the Seventh Army Corps to the other side of Bouillancy. Propped against the grassy embankment on either side of the highway lie corpses, withdrawn by loving hands from the hard surface where they fell so cruelly. During the halts we mingle with them, sitting or sprawling full length, until the whistle blows and we alone struggle to our feet, as though enacting some unfair Last Judgment. We glance idly through the registration books of these dead men, to see what punishments fell to their lot while they were in barracks. It is surprising to learn how few of them knew how to swim. At the crossroads we come across dead cavalrymen, for it is the fate of the cavalry to fall wherever the roads form a sunburst. Bouillancy is in ruins. From the tottering houses the soldiers have removed whatever furniture remains and set it out in the courtyards — tables, chairs, wardrobes, a few mirrors, and an occasional picture flat on the ground. The plan of the house is

sketched anew — all it needs is a roof. But now the dead begin to follow our lines, turning all at once toward the road, northward; it is following this meridian that we come out of battle.

All our dead are on the road before us, lightly laden, eased of their packs. We are purged of desires and of memories. Stirrings of curiosity, however, rise in each of us to know the most terrible thing the next man has seen. When we hear we look at one another in amazement. The experiences I have been through seem perfectly unreal; but what my neighbor is telling me seems stark-true, and I shudder as he relates horrors which are far less horrible than some of the things I have borne without shuddering. What an atrocious tongue do we now speak! Every question provokes a ghastly answer, as though that barrier in our minds which separates reason from madness were growing constantly more frail, as French and Germans come closer and closer to grips. What is that glow over yonder? It is our wounded soldiers burning to death at Nogeon farm. What are all those little black spots? Children trying to escape from a rain of shells. In the depths of our natures lie our old civilian selves, like things lifeless and without charm. Dollero no longer loves his *petite*

amie, has no intention of marrying her. Mourlin is weary of his school; and what does the Major's secretary, the worried professor of the history of art now care for Bourges or Sainte-Trophime? His gaze is vague, deadened; malice and candor have been dashed from his eyes like glass from a church window. His spectacles, too, are broken. He walks on the tips of his heavy boots, his feet in torment, taking all the precautions of a pedestrian who has been traveling for days over bad ground. Will the marble and granite of Saint-Rémi de Reims, Vézelay, Issoire ever bloom anew for him in the blessed light of evening, as the strange dried flowers of Japan unfold in summer in their dish of water? Where, after peace has returned, will he reopen his dinner-table offensive against the Gothic, cocking gayly the Romanesque arch of his eyebrow? At present his only thought is that he used formerly to march on the left side of the road, whereas he must now walk on the right; and that, after all, he does n't care, for his boots will wear out evenly.

Here is a great hole filled with cut stone; a sign-board reminds us that it is called a quarry. Here are some trees which do not space themselves out monotonously at our approach — each oak guard-

ing its beech, each beech its ash, with an encircling ring of alders and birches: this is a forest. The sky is cloudless blue, the winds have been appeased, and the terrified season is beginning to take heart once more. We are drenched with sunlight; instead of lavishing itself on soulless verdure alone autumn bestows its golden favor on our regiment and, as we march down the slopes, leaving yesterday's arena far behind, it dries and warms us in our draggled greatcoats, that are all white with mud like flies escaped from a sugar-bowl. At every turn of the road, in every patch of wood, it gives back to us one of those common things whose very existence we had forgotten — a house, a brook, a church, — and we seize on them gladly, as though they had been lost forever. The modest fellows who used to walk with their eyes on the ground in days of peace, and often find a small coin for their pains, come upon a railroad to-day, or a pond, and we recover too, one by one, a train of domestic animals, hungry, lost, determined to follow us — sheep, goats, oxen, that come bleating and lowing behind us. By some deserted cottages a man with an eye for flowers finds ivy-geranium, autumn-stricken; zinnias, withering balsam, and here and there the surprise of a

full-blown rose. We pass finally three wardrobes taken from a village by the Germans and hastily abandoned by the side of the road, where they hold up their mirrored doors, so that every man of us has a chance to stare, three times over, at a haggard, cadaverous countenance which he recognizes at last for his own.

V

THURSDAY

Thursday, the 10th.

GREAT bars of light shoot up from the west — from a sunset such as one sees when journeying, late of an afternoon, along the favorite route of Louis XIV, *le Roi Soleil*, from Charly to Versailles. The fighting must surely be over now, for the command is taking away from us all those little privileges which are granted the infantry while battle is in progress. We are forbidden to shoot at German aviators, forbidden to scour the countryside in patrols when our curiosity is roused, forbidden to ride on stray horses. They take away from us a victoria which we had gathered in. We have survived our usefulness.

Just before we get to Lévignen, however, the dragoons consign to us the personnel of a German hospital. The pharmacist, one Magnus, used to live in Paris, so he is the spokesman. Among the belongings of the doctors we make some interesting discoveries.

"What are you doing with this bust of Carnot?"

"Is that Carnot?"

"What are you doing with these children's shoes?"

"For our own little darlings. They're beautiful shoes."

"Bergeot," we shout, "come and look at these doctors!"

When we are displeased with a prisoner we call Bergeot to come and look at him. Bergeot's eyes are red and steady. He draws near and for a whole minute tortures Magnus with his stare.

In Lévignen, which has been mined by the Germans, two sudden explosions go off. Bergeot returns to Magnus. Another explosion. Bergeot lays a heavy hand on the German's shoulder.

"That's not treachery," Magnus explains, "it's the lottery of war."

"Shut up."

"It's the destiny of arms."

"Shut up, will you!"

"I do shut up. I am obliged to . . ."

Bergeot, satisfied now, informs the other prisoners that we have captured a German flag, and points to the company marching past. The men are thickset, grim; the Germans would be im-

pressed if it were not for poor Lieutenant Tancliat, who, on horseback for the first time in his life, rides far to the side of his saddle. With one word I set him straight in the estimation of my captives: —

"That is the lieutenant who killed General von Sastrow."

As a matter of fact he has killed no general, least of all General von Sastrow, who was past eighty-five when I visited his collection of footprints in marble at Munich. Magnus, however, turns white when Tancliat, nobly urging forward his steed by slapping its ears with the reins and its quarters with a switch, his left foot searching wildly for a stirrup irretrievably lost, draws up to our group and stretches out to me his death-dealing hand. I delay a few seconds to grasp it so that the Germans may see how white and well-kept it is.

Capricious night is unwilling to come on alone, so it brings rain with it. The beer-bottles which the Germans left standing by the roadside will be half-full of water to-morrow morning. With the rain the past awakes within us, for it has rained only once or twice since war began, and our memories of the last downpour of peace-times

are as vivid as those of some tremendous phenomenon like an eclipse. The last time it rained I was drinking sticky white wine at the Café Helvétique. I had just read in the newspaper a lampoon against the mayor. The time before that, I was at the wedding of my friend Jusse. Once, too, I saw Quebec and Naples in the rain. I even remember the first time it rained — that day I cried. Lévignen is almost deserted. We are quartered in a great prosperous farmhouse where we go about establishing order — for the Germans have just left it. Upstairs, they ransacked all the drawers for photographs of young girls which they stuck into the frames of mirrors, so that their ugly faces were reflected in the centre of these circles of innocence. We fold the women's underwear, replace the stoppers in the bottles, hang up the dresses. We are calm and methodical as if instead of defeating the Prussians, we had won some sort of a victory over ourselves.

Prosper passes on horseback. I had not seen him since Thann. His eardrum is perforated; and, to keep on the good side of him, I have to keep moving as his horse wheels. He tells me that he did not dare turn over the corpses from

my regiment when they seemed to be about my height.

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The Germans have invoked the aid of fog, cold, and rain, — anything that may check the pursuit for a few moments. Are we giving chase, or are we not? Dawn is coming on and we are getting restless. Fortunately we find ourselves before a comfortable middle-class house which amuses us for an hour or so. First we rest our backs against it, then we inspect it with as much curiosity as will our descendants in the thirtieth century, walking about through the rooms in groups. Here is a room with a sideboard; that is where they dined. In another room, two beds; evidently they slept there. A third room contains a tall lamp and upholstered furniture — the scene of intimate family gatherings where the weather was discussed. We slip on the waxed floors, just as one slips in a museum; we revive childhood memories in the shadowy pantry, in the well of the staircase, dark-rooms which reveal long-forgotten films. Coming out, we see brown fields where a territorial, trying to hasten his work under stress of the mobilization, broke two

ploughs and left them sticking in the earth. Our only real distraction is a soldier from Peaupié who has lost his memory, and whose comrades are making merry by supplying him with false recollections.

"Don't you remember those two Uhlans you killed at Mulhouse?"

"*I* killed two Uhlans?"

He insists that his adventures be written down as they are told him, protesting, however, when he is informed that he was seen eating half a pound of Bavarian soldier.

The Sixtieth Regiment swings past us, bound for Crépy-en-Valois, the band leading and setting a pace which brings murmurs from the rear. The musicians, who were carrying the wounded all last week, find their instruments light by comparison. Colonel MacMahon rides ahead. We pretend to be surprised at this.

"Hello! So you've still got your colonel, have you?"

They reply, apologetically, that he has been lightly wounded.

Off again. We cut across the ploughed fields in order to get past the rest of the brigade on the Gondreville highroad. Another halt. The gen-

eral calls for the colonels and majors; captains and lieutenants answer the summons. These latter, coming back, call in turn for company and platoon commanders; sergeants, corporals, and even privates present themselves. Maps are distributed to the officers. On map No. 32 the place where our fighting took place is no longer visible. We see the forest of Villers-Cotterets, V-shaped, "the first letter of the word Victory," says the general, scanning the forests on the other maps for the rest of the word — in vain. We advance again. On the banks beside the road lie big mushrooms, uprooted; others, much smaller, stand erect: they have grown there since the Germans passed.

Gondreville. Straddled on the top of a wall ride two urchins, who wave their hats and urge forward their imaginary steed whenever a horseman goes by. One feels, somehow, that on the other side of the wall some big person has hold of their feet, and keeps them from tumbling off. On the balcony of a forester's house stand two small girls. Are the villagers trying to accustom us, little by little, to the sight of civilians by showing us their children first? They call to us, throw us bacon and bread. The cannon are thundering ahead. "Oh, that's nothing! It's only the

battle ending!" cry the little girls. They jump up and down with excitement. They stretch their hands through the railing in order to touch our hands; then their arms come through, then their shoulders. As we go by we pull their hair gently, make believe get tangled in it in order to stop a moment and squeeze their tiny noses, pinch their cheeks.

The cannon never stop. We stumble into the cavalry, which has come to a halt. "Oh, that's nothing!" the little girls are probably thinking, "it's only the battle beginning again." As we sit in the moss, exhausted, we call in the services of fire to enliven us. We pour coal-oil on a nest of wasps and touch a match to it. We pour out the powder from some German cartridges and set it off. We light the corner of a three-months-old newspaper which Jalicot is reading. Fire is the only gayety, the only fooling we have at hand, and, as matches are scarce, we must needs pass them from hand to hand, playing swiftly. Suddenly, out of the forest, comes a boy of fourteen on his bicycle, bringing us wine and ham. He is from Vaumoise, where the Prussians lived for ten days; the bicycle he rides belonged to his brother of sixteen, whom they killed. They shot every

child they saw on a bicycle. He hurries off post-haste to fetch us something to drink (Vaumoise is only six kilometers distant) and as he turns on his wheel to call good-bye, he tumbles off. His poor knee is scraped raw, but he starts on again. A second boy soon appears, then two, three more, until from the woodland roads come forth all those who risked death at Prussian hands, —they grow older and older, so that, as we emerge from the forest, we are scarcely surprised to find two ancient beggars. We ask them for matches; clumsily they make the unaccustomed gesture of giving, blushing with confusion and joy as they do so.

Vauciennes. The sun is dazzling. The road curves and curves, till our heads begin to spin. Once in the village, we hug close to the houses like sheep who fear to go astray, until we come to a Uhlan stretched out on a sheaf of straw before a garden gate, who makes us turn out. He has got a bullet in the breast and the death-agony is upon him. His eyes are open, and for full ten minutes he sees our faces peering at him as we march by. If he lives another hour, he will see every man in the division. He watches us, fully conscious, amazed that among a thousand

soldiers there is not one brute to insult him; he has almost enough confidence in us to close his eyes. A little farther on, to the left, a Prussian cuirassier is also stretched out; but one must be anxious indeed to see an enemy die to take the trouble to cross the street. The Prussian therefore meets death alone, moaning.

It is eight o'clock. We are at the gates of Villers-Cotterets. The first houses seem empty. Our dragoons circle about them while the patrol knocks at the doors or rings the bells — ceremonious, if you like, but are we not in France? Finally, there is a noise at the upper windows; the shutters open slowly, and our rifles go up. It is only a good Sister in a starched cornette, however, who sees us, lifts her arms to heaven, and cries: —

"They've gone, the dirty pigs, they've gone!"

We hear her coming downstairs, stumbling over empty bottles in the hall.

"How the brutes guzzled! Do you want something to drink, boys?"

She kisses us, knocking off our caps with her cornette as she does so. Then she spies words written in German across her window-shutters.

"Ah, my dear boys! Wipe it off! No; wait!

I'll do it myself. No, let me! Don't dirty your handkerchiefs!"

Poor handkerchiefs which we have pulled out of our pockets, all mud and rust! They bring the tears to her eyes. We, who have gone so long without seeing civilians that we have forgotten to answer when spoken to, stand about in silence, stupid and embarrassed. The rest of the company comes up the ditch — an impressive spectacle for a Carmelite nun, for we are keeping the lances of the hussars and cuirassiers who have been killed or taken prisoner, and collections of sword-knots hang from our belts. Our great-coats are in a lamentable state; the buttons in front have burst, those in back have been cut off by the men who march behind us. The leather of our accouterments has been worn away by the earth, as if by pumice-stone. The Sister runs upstairs to get a brush, but when she comes down we have gone.

We are past the isolated houses now — well into the town. The inhabitants are already pouring out. After so many deserted villages, so many empty towns, the sight of these people who have lived on in the heart of their city, surrounded by a circle of empty houses like water-beetles

protected by air bubbles, wrings our hearts. They come running up shouting, a little surprised at the noise of their own voices after twelve days of deadly silence. The householders returning to their abandoned homes stop on the doorstep, key in hand, and wave to us, forgetting even to enter; they wave handkerchiefs instead of the hats which are locked up inside — for more than a week now they have gone bareheaded. Little girls, matrons, and old women . . . we have a curious impression of recognizing each one of them, when it is really only the ages that we recognize. The women would detain us, the men urge us on: —

"Come and rest a while. Let the Germans run!"

"Go after them, boys. You've got them beaten!"

The last of the enemy, they say, left only an hour ago. We quicken our step; the artillery has caught up to us now, crowding us to the right side of the road, and in its rumble the army seems to have found its true voice. The townsfolk must have been preparing for this moment; on the balconies of the houses appear old servants with flags made in secret. All Villers-Cotterets must

have been busy in the cellars for a week past, sewing together every scrap of red, white, and blue to be found; but when they see how haggard and cadaverous we look their one thought is to feed us. Only one old gentleman sticks to his window, taking photographs without end. All his plates will soon be gone, for if he had his wish he would take the picture of every soldier. When one of us turns toward him the temptation is too great, and the click is heard.

"Ah, if you could only make a group!" he cries.

From the windows they hand out everything that remains in the larders, hastily, as if to save it from Germans in the courtyard. The children run back and forth between us and the doorways, helping on with the good work. A lady who does not belong in this street follows us, distributing chocolate, but only bit by bit, so as to have a pretext for staying with us to the end.

"When did the Germans leave?" we ask.

She thinks we are fishing for a compliment.

"Yes, indeed," she declares, "you beat them, no mistake! Oh, you poor fellows!"

In the distance we see townspeople hurrying to scratch or rub off German inscriptions before we pass by; carrying away empty bottles, pick-

ing up garden-chairs, setting all the German disorder to rights, as though we did not know that the enemy had been there. Occasionally there is an outburst of sympathy for some particular soldier among us: —

"Oh, look at the big dark fellow! See that red-haired one!"

They restrain themselves, however, and the favored man receives not a whit more than his comrades. From every window come cries: —

"What do you want most?"

"Matches," we call back.

A handful of matches is distributed among us forthwith, each receiving two. The last man even gets three. Such is luck!

"Give us soap!"

Out it comes, square chunks of yellow soap, then little cakes of toilet soap, then fragments that have already seen use. Old gentlemen ask the numbers of the regiments following us; deep down in their hearts, perhaps, is a wish that they might have been delivered by their own sons, or grandsons, or sons-in-law — but after all, what difference does it make? They follow us a moment, out of politeness, asking whence we come.

"From Alsace."

Now they become a bit more ceremonious. How splendid, they say, it must have been when we entered Mulhouse! And what were the numbers of the regiments with us over there?

Old women trot along beside us, offering sugar, piece by piece. We are shrouded in our great-coats so they can recognize no one, and, as they keep about the same pace as we without realizing it, they give continually to the same man. In their starched aprons and fluted caps they eye our dirt and rags with humility. They could do our washing, they say, if only we were to be quartered in town. Finally, during a short halt, they come out with the question which has been torturing them: —

"You've had some men wounded?"

"Yes."

"And some killed?"

"Yes."

They dare not ask us the exact number. They feel the number of the victims growing in their imagination. Perhaps there were ten, fifteen, twenty — good Heavens, were there thirty?"

"Five hundred," says Bergeot.

They are horror-struck. Bergeot says that per-

haps he was exaggerating, and their slow-working minds set to work saving a few survivors from those five hundred: ten, fifteen, twenty. It almost seems as if those whom they had first given up for dead were being restored to them. Ah, if only they could save thirty!

We are off again. From one place we get only children's belongings — it was the primary school — little handkerchiefs, little pots of jam, little rolls of bread. Farther on a woman has saved some wine and pours it out for us by the quart. In the middle stands a workman waving a bottle and pouring its contents into our flasks.

"Drink it, go on and drink it," he says. "They've killed my son. It's Byrrh."

"Why not keep some for yourself?" says Bergeot.

"Drink it; they've killed my son."

We each of us accept only a drop or so; it won't take him ten minutes to get rid of it all. We hear him in the distance repeating the same words, then calling to his wife. We have not the heart to turn round and look at her.

We have come to well-paved streets now; the countrymen walk on them more cautiously, as on a waxed floor. To the left rises a high wall with

a baker astride it, passing hot loaves of bread out to us in a determination that his side of the street shall not be outdone in giving by those across the way. A civilian who has followed us into town rushes ahead of us, and flings himself into the arms of weeping parents. Shamefaced tradesmen and solid bourgeois loom up in our path; they feel dishonored, contaminated by the invasion, and will long keep their downcast looks, for they have had to hold their tongues for a fortnight — when they venture to address us it is with hesitating, high-flown expressions: —

"Pray believe," says the mayor, — "pray believe in the high regard of . . . regard of . . . Ah! do believe in it!"

The town urchins, swarming everywhere, help move the army along by pushing at the gun-carriages. We pass a poor old official who forgets for the first time in his life to be proud of the tablet on his house, where Alexandre Dumas once lived. He is covered with confusion at mistaking for a machine-gun our flag in its leather case. A priest is distributing tablets of chocolate, as he would bestow sacred medals. Every young girl has her specialty: one pours eau-de-cologne on our hands, or on our heads if we wish; another watches us

with eyes full of tears; another calls at the top of her voice to a woman in the house, invisible to us, who keeps passing cheese and preserves out of a small window. Here is an empty building all spattered with foreign words, which looks as if it were full of Germans. Every now and then we see a child or an old woman putting a bird cage or a pot of geraniums back on the window-sill. There stands a man in a frock coat, stern-visaged and silent, who is probably suffering remorse for having spoken to some Prussian officer, for not having told him lies enough. He drops to his knees to help me adjust my gaiter, stiffened and mouldy as an old piece of bark.

Others there are who have been thinking only of this deliverance, who rejoice at having waited for us unflinchingly, who speak frenziedly to us and cry forth their dearest thoughts from afar, because we have not disappointed their trust in us.

"I have two sons!"

"I am engaged to be married!"

The neighbors look in amazement at this young girl who for the first time blazons abroad her love. A school-teacher hastily jots down our addresses, that she may write our mothers, and pours her

pity and condolence on Dollero, who must give his father's address, his mother having died when he was still a child. The dogs, chained during the German occupation, begin to bark. When unleashed they instinctively recognize the soldiers and follow them.

One building more, and we shall have crossed the town. It is the Old Men's Home, the first structure to meet the German invasion. The Sisters have not allowed a single inmate to come out — there are too many horses abroad — but the porte-cochère leading into the big court is wide open, and the old men are lined up inside, taking precedence by age, no doubt, for the first rows are seated. Those behind, more robust, totter on benches. They wear a tawdry light blue uniform which, by all rules, would have made them invisible if they had been fighting. They wave their hats feebly — a touching signal — but this blocks the view of the gaffers in the rear, who protest; they stop then, and bareheaded (all except the frailest, whom the Sisters oblige to keep on their hats) content themselves with quavering out "*Vive la France*"; or, if in their youth they were tender-hearted, they simply weep. For these old men this was a real invasion; one week more

of it, and some of them might have died in the enemy's hands. A Sister passes the star inmates of the Home their old medals, and they pin them on with fumbling hands, afterwards stroking their beards with a proud little gesture as if to say to us: —

"See! I saved a child's life"; or, "I was in the Crimean War"; or, "I was employed twenty-five years by the same firm."

One of them gets as far as the door; they grant him this privilege because he has cataracts on his eyes and is used to finding his way about with a stick, even on fair-days.

"If only I could see!" he says. "Where are you bound?"

To Laon, then to Charleville, then to Bonn, we tell him. Farewell! There is the park; the last house of the city lies behind us, the first woodland cottage is just ahead. In front of it stands a distrustful child, who watches us and then passionately takes refuge in the arms of his grandfather, who happens along just then.

"*You* killed the Prussians, did n't you, grandpa?" he cries.

The old man hugs him, consoles him, says "Yes" again and again; then, taking advantage

of a moment when the urchin's face is hidden, he motions to us with his finger — hastily, lest his grandchild catch him in the act — that it is not true, that *we* killed them.

May on Lake Asquam

MAY ON LAKE ASQUAM

I AM stretched out in the middle of a great ring of mountains. When I get up onto my feet, I become their very pivot. I have put the sun on my left, as they taught me to do at school, and I am writing to you. The lake below me bears fragile islands on its surface, and pine logs, from the drifts broken up during the winter, wash vagrantly in its bays and coves. Humming-birds thrusting voraciously among the apple-blossoms, wound their swift bills on the hard wood and glance off again. To soothe the sore feet of the farm turkeys, — a degenerate race, — Mrs. Green is greasing the limbs of the tree where they come to roost. A thrush grazes me, a little breeze begins to stir. As when a bird alights by a dreaming poet and he is moved to see the very thought he was seeking within himself drop then, perfect — so a sweet and tender love, instead of stirring in my heart, lifts this page, fans me with its soft breath. In boat-houses hidden in the reeds the farmers are testing the motors of the boats which will be launched for their masters next month. Mrs.

Green is beating a rose-colored puff for me, because my bed ends under the window, and when I wake in the morning I see my sunny feet under the spread — and yet feel cold. In the depths of the creeks where the new-cut pines are floating, the lumbermen jump from one log to the next, whistling as they go. I envy them their balance; I feel overweighted with a lake and a sun on my left, and nothing on my right.

Where am I? I am in a land which I instantly recognize to be enormous, because these wasps that are this second buzzing about my head are three times bigger than they are in Europe. I am in the middle of New Hampshire, which is having its first sight of the sky-blue uniform, and, supposing that I have chosen this color myself, imagines me to be sensitive and generous. The Harvard Regiment is having a week of examinations, and I am taking a rest.

The motor left Boston early on Monday, reaching the suburbs at the hour when the typewriters, perched on their high-heeled, pointed shoes, in their low-necked foulard dresses, and bent slantwise to the wind, climb into the tramcars without touching the rail, anxious only for their hands; the stenographers following them rigidly erect,

thinking only of their heads. On the door-steps Irish girls with brown braids looped over their ears passed on to us, through soft blue eyes, the holiest thoughts they had been pondering in the night. We were following the highway bordered with Washington elms, very old trees whose trunks had been repaired with the sort of cement of which they make statues in this country; and immortality — as sap was lacking — had already reached the topmost branches. Lakes that grew clearer and clearer the farther we went held the water of the richer and richer parts of Boston, and we came at last to the very round, very blue lake that supplies Beacon Street.

At noon we were at Portsmouth, where I presided at a meeting the children were holding on the beach to sell their pet animals, for the benefit of their French godchildren. There were at least a hundred of them, all grave, eager, or at least aquiescent, save Grace Henderson, who clung to her white calf and wept. They bought it of her quickly, and in pity gave it back to her; but her brother obliged her to sell it again, and so she had to struggle and suffer three times over. There were Cuban birds, that you bought with their cages; native birds that you bought so as to set

them free; turtles which sold badly, as they wore the initials of their first master carved on their backs; goats; and there were animals which were also immolated for the cause — sad dogs, who had no resistance left in them, and sold themselves; a little elephant which clasped his mistress by a belt that gave, by a sleeve that tore, and so did not dare to take her by the pigtail. The governesses, to console their children, quickly bought these other animals, and took turns standing on a platform to read out letters from the godsons: "*Venez chez moi, j'irai chez vous,*" wrote Jean Perrot, "*et si je meurs je veux vous voir.*" Some professors who were there were amazed to discover that all French children use rhythmic prose.

Then came green forests cut by tumbling brooks, where little boys, who were fishing for trout with both hands, hailed us with a wink, as they did not dare to move or call out. Then came the country of the field-mice, where the owls have such fat haunches that they have to perch sideways for fear of tumbling off their twigs head first. Then came Sandwich, where a Lithuanian was waving his national flag, protesting all by himself against conscription. Then came Lake Asquam, and this local hilltop where I have lain

stretched out ever since, at the foot of a slim giant birch, which has only one tuft of verdure at its top, and will fall if it puts out a single other leaf.

My hostess is Mrs. Green, the farmer's wife, who wears her gray hair braided down her back, and a big striped shawl, and eyeglasses; but she twists the calves' tails, and fights with the rooster. When a word gets stuck in my fountain pen I shake it out into the lake from my steamer-chair. Sometimes, though, it is inside me that it hesitates, and then I have to get up myself, lean on my elbows, sometimes even stoop all the way over.

Who am I with? With two friends — a forester and an Australian poet. The morning belongs to Carnegie, the forester. By six o'clock he has me up and off on a dash to his district, straight across the islands where every owner keeps a different scheme of hours, according as he likes to see his children get up early or late. Silent beasts are waking in woods that still have their Indian names; the muskrat is taking his bath, the blue heron flies from an isthmus to an island, from an island to an islet, flying ever towards that little round point of noon. We land in haste, to avoid an upset, — for a new-cut pine log is already sliding

down the toboggan to the lake, — and go to the sawmill by a path that was once covered with sawdust, but that my forester has had tarred since he lost his gold chain. He teaches me the secret sign by which one may recognize the red pine, the white pine, and the black pine; he gathers together his group of woodcutters, who are going off to France, and forces me to denounce our biggest trees in French — the oak, the elm; I saw my favorite beeches with difficulty. In the short cuts we walk through the briars stiffly, as people who do not speak the same tongue always do, and not one of these noble gestures is lost, my dear, for the forest is full of lynxes. In the clearings he shows me the remains of the wood fires he has kindled since his childhood, and twenty years of embers still blacken his fingers. He is moved and sits down, my love, to dream . . . and suddenly four little woodchucks, my sweet, hurry timidly out of the ground; real little woodchucks, my heart. We catch them — they bite us, and try to get away — we pet them, my dear love.

But the night belongs to Rogers, the Australian. The whole world is dark, invisible; only one red point to be seen, Carnegie's cigar — he is noiselessly paddling on the lake. But miles away

the chosen tree that announces the moon suddenly twinkles down its whole length. That is because a whole moon is coming. Everything is radiant, everything shines. Rocks begin to show themselves, as white and polished as bleached bones. Far around the lake the reflection of the forest, just now cleft and jutting, becomes an even border. It is the hour when the Indians gave a name to all the things that surround us. The white mountains turn white, the yellow birches yellow, and blue, blue grow the owls. Every separate plane of the lake seems to lie on a different level, and the moon gnaws the water where it falls over the dams. A divine night, this, when the White Mountains are of silver and the birches of gold. At last the hour has come when I can find an epithet for my soul, and a name for my house. The bullfrog groans; the loon, black swan of the lake, utters cries, first piercing, then muffled, for he continually ducks his head under the water and pulls it out again. The true moon cautiously climbs farther and father from the false moon. . . .

But Rogers insists on talking. He wants me to talk to him of Seeger, who is dead, of Blakely, who is dead — of all the American poets who were killed before the American war began. He

persists in talking French, without allowing me to help him, and circles about the words he no longer knows: about the word "debonair," the word "ladder," the word "serenity." From my refuge in the very heart of the word I wait placidly for him, sometimes in the heart of a proper name, in the heart of Baudelaire — a stuffy place, his statue. Then he reads me his verses, which he wishes to adapt to Europe, because the Australian mouths are so different from our own.

"July has frozen the rivers," he says, "and the useless bridges are collected in the barn."

I shake my head; he understands, and corrects himself: —

"Summer has frozen the rivers, and the bridges" . . .

The loon sings on. The lake suddenly bursts into flame, for Carnegie is lighting a second cigar. Rogers grows emotional, takes my hand and circles about a word which expresses both loons and friendships, a word which even we in France, alas, do not know.

*

* *

When the storm breaks; when, by millions, the owners of the wooden houses bring their red-

striped tents in from the rain: when a flash of lightning allows you to see — through the isinglass of the top of the car in front of you — the shadow of two gray heads; when the black bird with the red wings folds his wings; when the pro-German shuts his window and suddenly feels so lonely and beaten that he bursts into tears; when, in the public parks, the crowds swarm under the tents of the recruiting sergeants, and help them move their posters, and torpedoes, and mortars under shelter; when the mother astride the purple motor-cycle tries in vain to reach out a hand and feel the baby dozing in the side-car; when the golden stags, the dragons and the golden cows whirl madly on the clock-towers of the barns, but always in time; when a Hannan shoe lies on the deserted avenue; when a blast of wind lifts the page of the one-armed accountant, and he holds it down with the point of his pen, calling for help; when one hears nothing on the side-walks, on the sea, on the buildings, but the rain . . . then when a sunbeam comes down, and a sharp cloud cuts it, and it falls; when the rainbow shivers, its left on the solid city cement, its right on the sea; when you gather the sun into a corner of the sky, as if it were your one last match — and it finally burns;

when a victorious sunbeam, falling on the terrace beats by the fraction of an inch a rain-drop that has come from thousands of miles less far away; when the baby in the side-car gets the last drop of all, and begins to cry — then when the pond-lilies climb up to the level of the new pond that has formed about them; when the farmer in his rubber boots tramps out to empty his pitch cans and his maple syrup cans of their water; when a child, for no reason at all, wants to burn a joss-stick; when the traveller, at the turn of the Cañon, gets down to pat his mule and all at once remounts quickly for the storm is rumbling again, and he wants to keep his saddle dry; when the rain begins to beat down once more, in a deluge, the very same rain, as you can plainly recognize by its drops: then I think of him, of Seeger, who loved storms, and I shudder.

"How did Seeger die?" asks Rogers.

In a month Rogers will be leaving for the war, and he loses no opportunity of informing himself how the poets, his colleagues, were killed. It would be very odd if two poets were killed in the same way, the same identical way; each one of these deaths is death that fate will deny him. He will not wander, like Rupert Brooke, repeating

one Christian name after another, and dying at the first woman's name. He will not have him, as Dollero did, to write me three letters; the first with a splinter and his blood saying good-bye; the second with his nurse's pencil, hoping to see me; the last with the doctor's fountain pen, — confident, happy, unfinished. He will not drop dead like Hesslin, the German poet, on the back of a mystical sergeant who rose slowly with his load, and bore it to the hospital without casting a backward look. He will need a whole grave to himself, since he is not to die like Blakely, whose poor remains fitted into a Palmer's biscuit box. It will not be at dark, as it was with Drouot, or at noon, as it was with Clermont. If Seeger died at dawn, there is no time left for him but night. Bitter night, running under the days like some infernal strawberry vine. Soft night, with its lake, its loons. Night on the Sydney steamers, when the world turns silent, and nothing stands in the way of a poet's thoughts but the mute strain of a vessel. Night near some French spring where you lie, scarcely aware of your wound, and nibble a leaf of water-cress. Somber night, in whose very center, sharp cut against the velvet dark, the sun suddenly appears. Happy he who dies at night!

"How did Seeger die? Did you know him?"

Rogers is astigmatic, wears heavy gold-rimmed spectacles with lenses of different pattern, and always asks you two questions at a time. Yes, I had seen him. Once it was in the Luxembourg, in summer; he was just coming into that unreal garden, with its world of fantastic and tender Parisians — those who felt themselves too heavy could buy little balloons at the gate. Another time it was at the house of a friend whom he had tried to find the two preceding evenings; on the first he left a couplet, on the second a sonnet. My friend allowed himself to be surprised in bed, the third day, and so did not get his poem.

"Did he suffer? Have you seen his last verses?"

For Rogers also collects the last poems of all the poets who have been killed. He even collects their last letters in prose, where sometimes two words clash into each other and rhyme — the same thing happens when a departing warrior is dressing in his apartment, with his friends standing about, — and makes them tremble. It may be a last letter written to an aunt between the two last poems, when, in spite of himself, he uses the poetic epithet (as the other does not come) — talks of "steeds," and "blades," and "meads," and feels

obliged to be somewhat ironic. Last poems where nearly all of them saw death as it was, in fact, to overtake them, Seeger like a mistress, longing for a rendezvous, Dollero like a storm with three stray birds, Blakely like a headless monster — and when only Brooke foresaw things all wrong. Poor Brooke who told us "*Si je meurs, dites vous que dans une terre étrangère il y aura toujours un coin de terre anglaise. Une poussière plus riche que la terre y sera contenue, un corps d'Angleterre lavé par les rivières anglaises, brûle par le soleil anglais,*" "*un corps horizontal tendu sur la ligne de tous les corps anglais,*" and in the end died on a boat, and was thrown into the sea with a cannon ball to keep his shroud upright. So that, for all one's pity one is put on one's guard, and when one turns over his other poems one no longer believes exactly what they say; no longer believes that love is *une rue ouverte où se precipite ce qui jamais ne voient, un traître qui livre au destin la citadelle du cœur, un enfant étendu.* One grows obstinate about it, insists on believing that love is a street, if you like, but a street with no outlet; a traitor perhaps, but in that case a friendly traitor; and sometimes one sees the charming fellow standing quite vertical, floating sadly in the air.

"How did Seeger die?"

It is summer. Everything that prevents one from breathing in summer — his cap, his gas-mask — he throws off. He holds his cigar behind him, because of the smoke; the company thief steals it away from him, — thank heaven, for so his hands will not burn up after his death. Then he stretches himself, but without lifting his arms, crosswise. He has just one minute to live. There is your watch before you, with its second hand: one minute and he will be dead. In his pocket is the bottle of heliotrope perfume that he is to break as he falls. Now you have not even time, before he dies, to write that short sentence which he took for his motto, the one that he wrote at the head of every poem — about the poplars. If it is a shell, the cannon is being loaded. If it is a bullet, the German soldier is tapping his charge and slipping it in. Seeger raises his head. The sky is very blue. A poplar, yes, a poplar is outlined on the horizon. Seeger climbs the firing step — a bird, yes, a . . .

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So my three days of rest have gone, and now it is noon. I think of you who wrote me every week

from Europe, a letter of variable mood — Even the color of the paper is inconstant, and each one, like the flash of a revolving lighthouse, throws a new region into high relief. Love is a restive horse, a saddled antelope, a faithful traitor. The sun is just above me now. I was writing, to spare my eyes, in the shadow of my head; there is no shadow left; adieu, Madame, I write the last word, I write your name, full in the sun.

THE END

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